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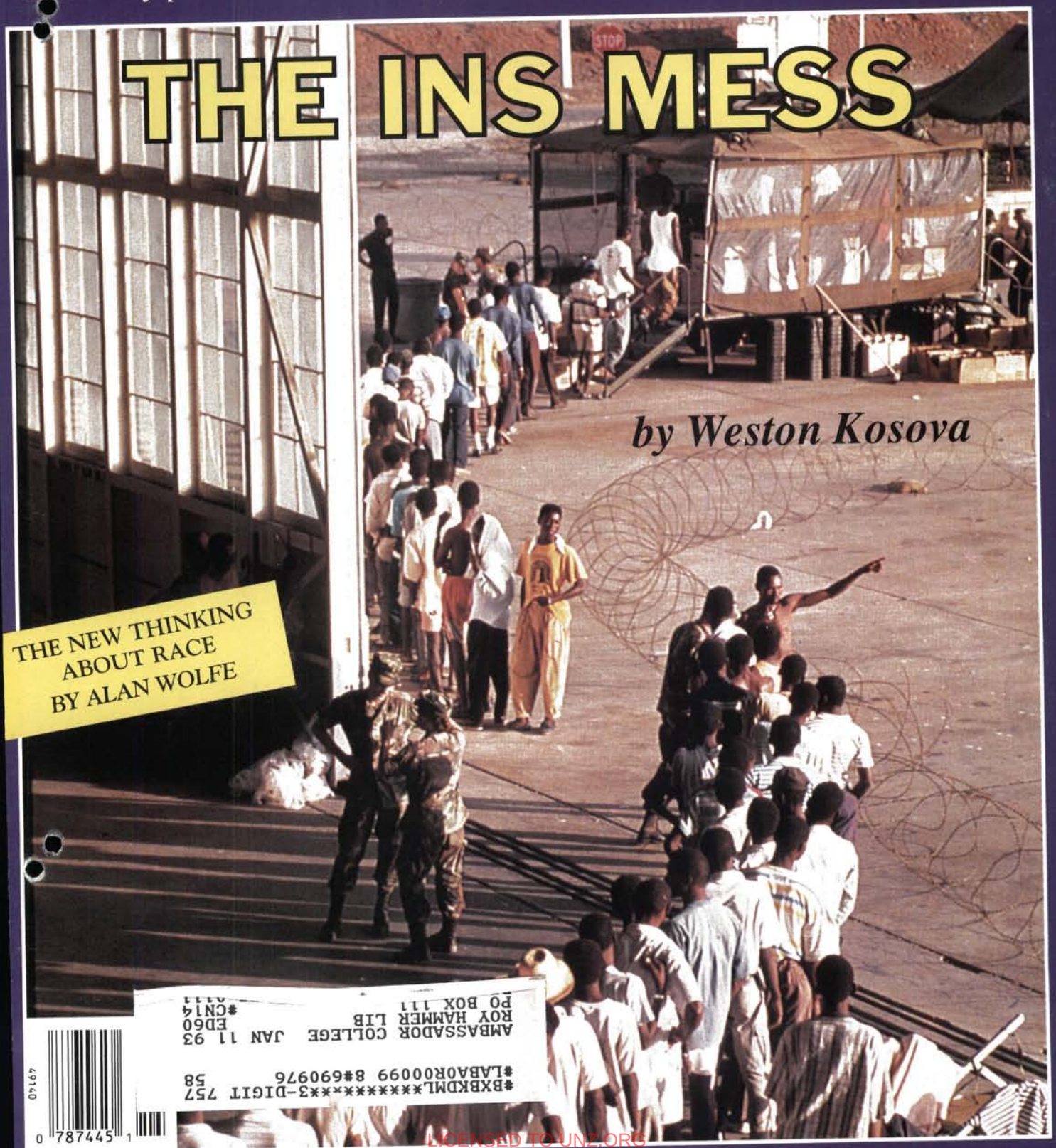

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CORRESPONDENCE

Wolf pack

To the editors:

Readers of TNR may be interested to learn that there is a long and colorful history behind Naomi Wolf's characteristically muddled and ill-written attack on me ("Feminist Fatale," March 16). In my public lectures, as well as media interviews, I have frequently used Wolf's incoherent and poorly researched book, *The Beauty Myth*, as a perfect example of what has gone wrong with both feminism and Ivy League education.

Wolf's piece is, of course, not a "reply" at all to my analysis of the Presbyterian report on human sexuality ("The Joy of Presbyterian Sex," December 2), whose principal points she never addresses. Like so many of today's feminists, she is deaf, dumb, and blind to questions of comparative religion and world history and anthropology. She misreads complex or ambiguous sentences, and she coarsely politicizes every human or spiritual issue. American feminists like Wolf see nothing but their own pampered white, upper-middle-class world, whose privileges they enjoy even while they endlessly bitch about the big, bad patriarchy.

Wolf's main thesis is that a virulent "backlash" against feminism is abroad in the land and that it is responsible for my current prominence. This breathless, Chicken Little view of reality has become a recent staple of feminist propaganda, typified by Susan Faludi's *Backlash*, a hand-wringing docudrama masquerading as journalism. In point of fact, there is no such backlash against feminism, a progressive movement that most intelligent people support. The backlash is precisely against the kind of rigid, outmoded feminist ideology represented by Wolf and Faludi. People are sick of it, and it is endangering the legitimate aims of feminism.

Feminism is 200 years old and has had many phases. We can vigorously support feminism—the quest for the full political and legal equality of women—and still criticize the entrenched feminist establishment and its disastrous academic counterpart, women's studies, which is doing so much damage to promising minds of the next generation. Young women like Naomi Wolf are coming out of our best colleges without the ability to reason from historical evidence or to construct persuasive logical arguments.

Wolf's few specific objections to my article are deceptively mixed up with unattributed phrases from my prior articles in other publications. For example, she quotes from my *New York Times* op-ed piece on Madonna without acknowledging that I was defending the star against feminist criticism, which erupted again afterward when *Ms.* magazine categorically refused to name Madonna in its special feature honoring women leaders in popular music.

Similarly, Wolf quotes a reference to Carry Nation from my *Newsday* date-rape article but then launches into a bizarre list of Famous Sexy Women of the Past without acknowledging that she is simply proving the very point I constantly make: feminism has *become* prudish; it was not always that way. As happened a century ago, feminism has slid into a censorious, reactionary Carry Nation repressiveness. In America the powerful feminist energies that won women the vote were unfortunately diverted into the Temperance movement, which severely damaged the feminist cause. Today's equivalent to Temperance fanaticism is the puritanical anti-pornography wing of feminism, led by Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin.

Ironically, the most recent Sexy Feminist that Wolf can come up with is Germaine Greer. In many interviews, I have lamented the tragedy of Germaine Greer: all of feminism would have been different if she had stayed on her original track. She was beautiful, sexy, sophisticated, literate, witty. What happened? Within three years she was an obsessed, humorless drone. I saw it with my own eyes, when Greer was touring America in the early 1970s and, in response to questions, dismissed literature and art as "unimportant" in her new world order. Greer herself has talked for years about her bitter disillusion with sex, most recently in a major London profile.

The next area where Wolf shows her imprisonment in her own elitist feminist ideology is in her remarks about "sexual *difference*" being the theme of the last ten years of feminist thinking. She cites Luce Irigaray as the great oracle here. Alas, this proves my point about the mental dungeon of academic women's studies. Derrida and Lacan, two turgid, pompous exponents of the moribund school of Saussure, are the real source of the ideas of the wildly overrated Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous, who have no historical or sociological abilities whatever. How many working women or even feminists within NOW, I wonder, give a green fig for French theorists like Irigaray or Cixous? Wolf should get out of her Ivy League ghetto and open her eyes to the real world.

As for Carol Gilligan, it may surprise Wolf to know that Gilligan's work is not highly regarded outside women's studies. I find Gilligan's thinking unpersuasive and sentimental, and many others have noted the geographical and class limitations of her sample. Wolf mentions Suzanne Gordon's *Prisoners of Men's Dreams* as if to refute me, but I'm afraid she hasn't done her homework. Last year, in a withering review of that book, I said (and this beautifully applies to Wolf's work too), "American feminism is trapped in a princess mentality of snippy entitlement." *Working Woman* magazine recently invited me to debate Suzanne Gordon (the excerpted transcript appears in the March 1992 issue), and I came away with a high opinion of her intellectual power and ethical passion. But I submit that current feminist ideology does not allow for true intellectuality, which is why Gordon's book is much weaker than she is in person.

In perhaps the boldest fabrication of her piece, Wolf claims that she read "a century's" worth of commentary on sex in her "women's studies course" at Yale. Gee, that must have been some reading list! Wolf clearly doesn't have the remotest idea of the breadth and depth of the psychoanalytic literature I was talking about—Freud, Krafft-Ebing, Jung, Ferenczi, Adler, and so on. It takes many years to study and absorb the vast 100-year history of psychology, which is much subtler and far more learned than the present women's studies syllabus.

Just how well Wolf actually knows Melanie Klein and Karen Horney is shown by her vague, careless dating of them at "midcentury." The pioneering work by these women that I was referring to dates from the 1920s. Women's studies is choked with Lacan, not Klein and Horney, and the ubiquitous, priggish Lacan feminists usually have little familiarity with Klein's anticipation of Lacan's theories.

The truth about Wolf's superficial knowledge of modern psychology was shown on a recent "Pozner and Donahue Show," where, in response to remarks made by another guest, she brightly called out, with a teacher's pet reflex, "Dorothy Dinnerstein!" and "Nancy Chodorow!" That is, she naively and inaccurately attributed to two of the bigwigs of contemporary feminism ideas that in fact originated with others eight years ago. This is a perfect example of the provincialism of women's studies, of its born-yesterday brainwashing of the young in order to preserve its own political power. Feminism *is* the establishment now, and in academe it is ruled by petty tyrants. Massive reform is needed to put feminism back on track.

I shall pass over Wolf's pitiful attempts to deal with Nietzsche, who is plainly far too complex for her. Her fumbling

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résumé of what she thinks is my view of Dionysus is simply laughable. Readers of my book, *Sexual Personae*, will recognize that Wolf is in total ignorance of my critiques of liberalism and '60s Dionysianism, which I intricately trace to their origins in High and Late Romanticism.

Finally, one cannot conclude without exclaiming at the sheer daffy bathos, the Harlequin Romance vulgarity of Wolf's trumpeting to us the steamy details of her first orgasm. Oh, the "pure heat and lig' " of it! And our gal miraculously saved from "septicemia on a basement gurney"! All because of a white knight handing her "a rubber disk and a trial-size tube of gel." I guess this is Ivy League pornography, lots of lush gush with a chic social message.

CAMILLE PAGLIA
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The writer is a professor of humanities at the University of the Arts.

To the editors:

I am not one of Camille Paglia's greatest fans. Like Naomi Wolf, I am disturbed by her invocation of reactionary gender archetypes that seem to relegate women to the primordial ooze while reserving the glories of creativity and transcendence to the male. It seems to me, however, that Wolf seriously oversimplifies Paglia's message. A champion of pornography, abortion, homosexuality, and marginal forms of dangerous sex hardly qualifies as anyone's Phyllis Schlafly. Much of Paglia's public persona is built on calculated *épatage*—and this quest for the outrageous often leads her into major inconsistencies.

But because Wolf chooses to ignore entirely those sides of Paglia's work that do not suit her thesis, she lapses into some inconsistencies herself. Yes, Victoria Woodhull was a nineteenth-century feminist *and* free-love advocate, but she was ostracized by much of the suffragist movement as too scandalous. Most Victorian-era feminists sought not to give women the sexual freedom enjoyed by men but to subject men to the sexual restrictions enforced on women. And while today's crusade against date rape and sexual harassment addresses legitimate issues, it does contain a strong anti-sexual element—particularly evident in the feminist anti-pornography campaign. Catharine MacKinnon, who has recently emerged as one of America's best-known feminists, has explicitly written that in a sexist society such as ours, the notion of consent is questionable and drawing the line between sex and rape is difficult.

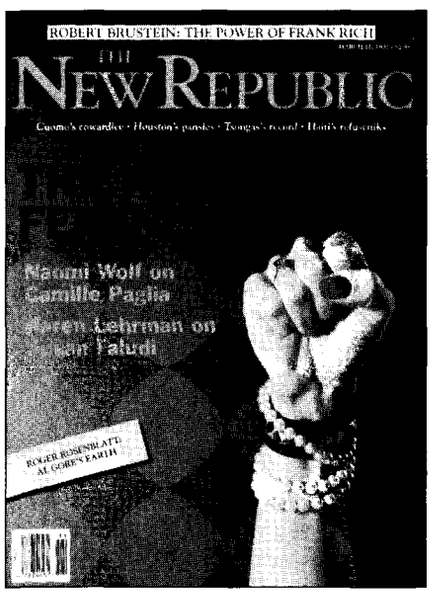
However, I am overjoyed to see Wolf argue that much of the Western intellectual tradition champions the feminist ideals of sexual equality. I can only hope she will point this out to the radical academic feminists who scornfully dismiss that very tradition as a collection of woman-hating screeds by dead white males.

CATHY YOUNG
Middletown, New Jersey

To the editors:

If Naomi Wolf is emblematic of the new feminism, then feminism is in trouble, or at least it should be. By suggesting that the libidinal is the political—"political commitment often comes from intense physical experience"—she convincingly paints herself, and feminism, into the hedonistic corner of the "new class."

While Wolf's first feminist principle of "sweaty virility" (the "essential feminist gift," this sexual commissar writes, is to



make a 15-year-old's orgasm "a safe loss of virtue unmarked by social ostracism") may fit the lifestyles of the Oxford-educated and famous, it most certainly does not fit the lives of her sisters in the inner city. With urban illegitimacy rates skyrocketing past 67 percent (not to mention AIDS), Wolf should know better than to trot out that therapeutic ethic, "sexual desire." In the inner city many teenagers have to deal with *consequences* for enjoying "the combustion of sexual desire."

BRAD WILCOX
Charlottesville, Virginia

To the editors:

Those of your readers who waded through the contents of Naomi Wolf's women's studies course notes (taken "at Yale" no less) might like to know that Milton was perhaps not the kind of feminist Wolf wants him to have been. Book IV of *Paradise Lost* contains these memorable lines about Adam and Eve:

> though both
> Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;
> For contemplation he and valor formed,
> For softness she and sweet attractive grace;
> He for God only, she for God in him.

Reflecting on Milton might give Wolf some inkling of the nuance of Western attitudes toward women. She could also read *Madame Bovary* for a glimpse of the consequences for everyone of the selfishness and promiscuity she celebrates. Then, God willing, Wolf might spare us the details of her sex life as a teenager.

MICHAEL WARNER
Wheaton, Maryland

To the editors:

Naomi Wolf cites Milton's *Areopagitica* as "an early feminist critique of marriage." But she has it wrong. *Areopagitica* is about censorship and licensing laws for publications, not about marriage. Milton wrote *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (and three other tracts) about marriage and the laws governing it. Calling him a feminist is anachronistic. Milton was a Puritan, though a comparatively liberal and humanistically educated one. He favored the death penalty for adulterers and attacked King Charles I for permitting mixed dancing on Sundays.

WILLIAMSON M. EVERS
Stanford, California

The writer is a visiting scholar at the Hoover Institution.

To the editors:

Naomi Wolf's rebuke to Camille Paglia was smart, elegant, and convincing until she tried to wrestle rock 'n' roll from Paglia's "old-time repressiveness." While Wolf is right that "in our postmodern air there are many frequencies," she winds up getting burned by the ambiguities of her own axiom. She quotes "Rebel Yell," the erstwhile hit by Brit Billy Idol, and upholds the song's blunt lyrics as a celebration of feminine sexuality. This is the same Billy Idol who recently pleaded guilty to a reduced charge of battery for beating up a 23-year-old woman. Naomi's orgasmic ecstasy would have been better served by bands and artists more tuned in to her pleasure principle: Lush, Sinead O'Connor, the Cocteau Twins, My Bloody Valentine, the Cure, the Happy Mondays, the Heart Throbs (whose album title "Cleopatra Grip" refers to—well, I'm sure Naomi gets it).

MARK G. JUDGE
Potomac, Maryland

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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TRB FROM WASHINGTON

Flatliner

Jerry Brown's campaign technique is to grab onto some issue he's shown no previous sign of caring about, and then to condemn with self-righteous wrath everyone who fails to join him immediately in his newfound faith. In Brown's way of thinking, you are hopelessly corrupt if you still think as he thought until the day before yesterday.

In his long public career, Jerry Brown never expressed any interest in election finance reform or tax simplification until now. (He actually *denounced* campaign contribution limits as recently as 1990.) These are both worthy causes, but they are poisoned by Brown's transparent opportunism. In the case of his endorsement of the so-called "flat tax," Brown either doesn't understand his own proposal or is lying about it or, most probably, both. That swoony editorial note in *The New York Times* the other day, calling Brown's tax idea "dazzling" and "simply brilliant," must be based on misunderstanding, since *The New York Times* doesn't lie.

Brown says he would like to eliminate the federal income tax, the Social Security payroll tax, and the federal gasoline tax, replacing all of them with a flat 13 percent tax on personal income and a "similar value-added levy on business." The only deductions would be for mortgage interest, rent, and charitable contributions.

It sounds great. Who wouldn't like to pay just 13 percent? The basic principle shares the spirit of the 1986 tax reform: eliminate the loopholes and lower the rates. George Bush and Bill Clinton are both marching backward from the 1986 reform with proposals for special tax breaks for this, that, and the other.

But what about the math? The federal government currently absorbs 22 or 24 percent of GDP. Federal tax revenues have been running about 19 percent of GDP. How could a 13 percent tax—even if it covered every form of economic activity in the country with no deductions at all—possibly produce enough revenue to finance the government? Answer: it couldn't. Brown claims his scheme would bring in just as much cash as the current system—not even counting the explosion of productivity it supposedly would set off. Robert McIntyre of Citizens for Tax Justice calculates that Brown would actually come up short by $200 billion a year (on top of a deficit already running at $400 billion). But let Brown have his way on this one. If he's bringing in as much money as the current system, someone is paying a lot more than 13 percent. Who?

In speeches and interviews, Brown is all over the lot on who pays more and who pays less under his system. "Our proposed flat tax ... reduces the amount of taxes collected from individuals by about 45 percent and puts the obligation back on business." So businesses pay more? Oh no. "Today ... companies ... pay a corporate tax of 35 percent. We eliminate that tax and we put a straight 13 percent tax on all businesses.... Japanese companies ... are paying half what their counterparts in this country are paying." Overall, Brown claims, "Those earning less than $100,000 annually will pay less in taxes. Those people who make more than $100,000 will pay proportionally more."

That is flat wrong. The kicker is that "value-added levy" on businesses. A value-added tax, or VAT, is a sales tax. As consumers in Europe can tell you, a VAT gets added to the prices of products and services. Those prices wouldn't jump by a full 13 percent, since Brown would repeal the corporate income tax, which also is partially reflected in prices. But the effect of shifting almost half the tax burden to a VAT is highly regressive. Middle-class people who must spend most of what they earn would pay twice: once through their own individual tax and again through the VAT. Low-income people now exempt from taxes would also be paying both a 13 percent income tax and a VAT on every penny they spend. The poorest of the poor, with no income, would still pay the VAT. Only those able to live on a small fraction of their income would pay an effective rate close to 13 percent. In essence, the richer you are, the less of your income would be taxed. Some flat tax.

Brown got his "flat" tax plan from two researchers at the right-wing Hoover Institution named Robert Hall and Alvin Rabushka, who have been pushing it since 1980. (The Hall-Rabushka version is actually less regressive than Brown's: it settles for a flat rate of 19 percent with a generous per-family allowance.) Hall and Rabushka make no bones about the fact that their scheme amounts to a consumption tax: "people are taxed on what they take out of the economy, not on what they put in."

Although Brown's proposal is slightly different, the way both schemes treat business investment means that they essentially exempt all capital profits from taxation. Once again, Hall and Rabushka are perfectly honest about this: their intention is to promote saving and investment. That is well and good. But the effect is to leave the entire burden of financing the government on wages. Brown is not honest about this effect (if he understands it). And it certainly makes an odd platform for the candidate who postures these days as the tribune of the working stiff.

Even as an incentive for productive investment, fairness aside, you can question the wisdom of the Hall-Rabushka-Brown approach. Their system would allow the immediate deduction of all business costs, rather than requiring long-term investments (equipment, buildings) to be "depreciated" over a number of years. We've been down this road before. The 1981 tax bill allowed generous early depreciation—although not this generous—to stimulate investment. One result was *negative* effective tax rates on some kinds of investments (in effect, the government pays *you*), which produced a lot of empty office buildings and other economically nonsensical projects. Another result was that many corporations paid no taxes at all. The rules were revised almost immediately, but we're still paying the price.

Brown asserts, in characteristic language, that his tax plan would transform the "dark nature of American tax reality" in which "only the rich hire lobbyists ... to insure that the system favors themselves at the expense of everyone else." That's not an unfair description of the present tax-writing process. Of course there's no logical reason to think that any particular revision of the tax code will stop the lobbyists from lobbying for the next revision. But if adoption of Brown's so-called flat tax led rich folks to call off their lobbyists once and for all, it would only be because, from their point of view, he had made the tax code perfection itself.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 13, 1992

HAUNTED HOUSES

President Bush's popularity rating is down to 38 percent and Congress's is down to 20. So, as you might expect, Bush is trying to boost his standing by blaming the country's ills on Congress. Somehow, we doubt that Bush would be so critical if Congress were Republican-controlled. And if it were, we doubt that Congress would be any less scandal-ridden or any more capable of saying no to special interests. Bush himself has been dispensing plenty of pork along the campaign trail. And congressional Republicans are in no position to criticize their Democratic colleagues as profligate spenders.

Bush has two primary proposals for reforming Congress, a presidential line-item veto and term limits for legislators. The former might help—a bit. Practically every state governor has an item veto, and the absence of one at the federal level diffuses responsibility for our ruinous deficits. To get an item veto, though, would require a constitutional amendment initiated by Congress, and it's hard to imagine Congress ever voting for it.

Term limits, on the other hand, are a useless idea. The Constitution already provides them—two years for representatives and six for senators. Those who don't believe these limits mean anything should ask Senator Alan Dixon of Illinois and Representative Beverly Byron of Maryland, defeated in Democratic primaries not because they overdrew bank accounts, but because constituents didn't like their records.

But new people in a corrupt old system will soon come to emulate the hacks they replace. This happened to the 1974 Watergate class of Democratic freshmen, whose "reforms" produced the vast, incumbent-protection system that prevails on Capitol Hill. Here's what's really needed:

Better Leadership. Speaker Tom Foley knew in 1989 that there were rampant overdrafts at the House bank but did nothing to clean up the problem. Until late March, after the bank scandal broke, he even refused to support an effort by Representatives Lee Hamilton and Bill Gradison and Senators David Boren and Pete Domenici for a year-long, intensive study of overall reform of Congress. Foley should go. So should most of the hidebound committee chairs. Representative Dave McCurdy and others have proposed term limits for these power brokers. We support the idea.

Campaign Finance Reform. Congress is on the verge of finally passing a bill calling for limits on campaign spending and taking steps toward public funding. Republicans detest both ideas, and Bush is threatening a veto that will make many anti-reform Democrats happy. Until now, the history of campaign reform has been one of failed promises and unintended consequences. It's time for a more comprehensive approach. The president, were he serious about reform, would fool everyone and sign the bill, then up the ante by demanding legislation that follows the logic of reform even further. He should call for free TV time for candidates and mailing rights for challengers to match incumbents who have the frank.

Ethics Reform. Let's face it, members of the House and Senate can't adequately police each other, as the Senate showed in the Keating Five affair and the House is showing in the present bank scandal. A better solution: appoint retired federal judges to sit on ethics panels.

Abolish Committees. Congress got along with 173 committees and subcommittees in 1950. The figure today is 282. A complex piece of legislation—say, an energy or trade bill—may have to run a gauntlet of eight or nine subcommittees, and then a House-Senate conference with 200 members, all eager to add or subtract special items for constituents. Senators are members, on average, of five committees. They can't possibly keep track of the work. This system needs to be made more rational.

Fire Staff. Senate and House members' staffs have nearly doubled since 1967, and House committee staffs have grown even faster. The total is now above 30,000. This is the result of members hiring employees to do "constituent service," which helps their re-election campaigns. Committees, besides having a cadre of professional staff who understand policy, often have partisan minority and majority staffs to keep an eye on each other, plus staffs assigned to individual members.

The Hamilton-Boren reform commission is supposed to come up with a plan to review these ideas and others. If both houses approve, the commission will draft the first comprehensive reform effort since the LaFollette-Monroney Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, which radically reduced the number of congressional committees and assigned them new jurisdictions. That setup has since grown obsolete. Structural reform is no substitute, however, for resolve among America's political leaders to forgo present consumption, pay off debt, and invest in future prosperity. Such determination is a commodity in scarce supply on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. •

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NOTEBOOK

BUSHISM OF THE WEEK: "I went through whatever I've got. This—I was in Congress 1967 to 1970. You were about four at the time. And I don't—I can't find checks back long. Most people in America don't save them. I did find a ledger sheet that shows I have positive balances at the beginning from—for only four years, my own bookkeeping, had positive balances at the beginning of every month at the end. And I take great pride in the fact that I don't bounce checks." —March 17, at a press conference

NEWTONIAN PHYSICS:
1. "A [Gingrich] spokesman said one check had bounced and it was covered within two days." —*Newsweek*, October 14, 1991
2. "Republican Whip Newt Gingrich, the most likely leader of a charge against Democratic rule, sheepishly issued a press release admitting to three bad checks, no amount given." —*U.S. News and World Report*, October 14, 1991
3. "Gingrich ... called for an independent prosecutor.... 'The worst offenders did know they were overdrawn.... [They] were being called every day,' Gingrich said." —Associated Press, March 16, 1992
4. "'I may have somewhere between fifteen and thirty, we don't frankly know yet, that have been specially handled,' [Gingrich] said. 'We don't know how many of these were overdrafts and how many of those were checks which had other problems, such as not having signed them.'" —Associated Press, March 16, 1992
5. "Now a spokesman says the number is between twenty and thirty. Hey it isn't that big a deal, Rep. Gingrich says. 'I don't think if you take a drink it's comparable to killing somebody or driving under the influence,' he told Associated Press." —*The Wall Street Journal*, March 18, 1992
6. "... Gingrich privately resisted full disclosure at first, which would have revealed upwards of thirty bad checks, far more than the three checks he disclosed a few months ago." —*The Wall Street Journal*, March 20, 1992

CHECK AGAIN:
"As soon as I figured out what the situation was, after we compiled our records over the weekend, I called the president on Sunday up at Camp David to give him a heads up so that he would not be surprised." —Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, at a March 17 press conference

Q: Sir, what about Cheney's overdrawn checks?
PRESIDENT BUSH: I haven't heard a word about that.
—President Bush, aboard Air Force One, March 17
(thanks to Steve Moazed, Washington, D.C.)

OUT OF THE BOTTLE:

290,000 genies to take part in NU's gathering

—*Jakarta Post*, February 28

BEHIND THE VEIL: The situation in Iraq appears more desperate than ever. Last week Saddam Hussein ordered an end to lavish tipping of belly dancers. The rule was promulgated after an Iraqi millionaire was reported to have thrown a 1 million dinar check ($3.2 million at the official exchange rate) at a gyrating artiste in a Baghdad nightclub. With the Iraqi government instituting such draconian austerity measures, it appears clear that the country's economy is grinding to a halt. Congressional Democrats who voted against the war have been vindicated: sanctions are finally working.

GO TEAM: Congratulations to ourselves for no less than four National Magazine Award nominations. This year's seventy-seven finalists include Michael Kelly for Reporting; Michael Kinsley and Tatyana Tolstaya in the Essays & Criticism category; and TNR for General Excellence, circulation under 100,000, the category in which we won last year. The winners will be announced on April 16 in New York, and subsequently in this space.

CREDIT DEPARTMENT: Last week's issue neglected to note that a shorter version of Fouad Ajami's article, "The Other 1492," appeared previously in *U.S. News and World Report*. •

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

PARADIGM REGAINED

By Fred Barnes

The world's safest bet in 1992 was that President Bush would overcome his qualms and trash Congress. The only surprising thing was that Bush restrained himself for so long. Asked about the House banking scandal on March 17, Bush declined to take the bait. He said the bank was a "major institutional problem" about which all the facts weren't known. Three days later the facts still weren't in, but

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Bush's reservations had vanished. In announcing his veto of a Democratic tax package, he said Congress was fueled by "special interests," unable to police itself, and governed by mindless partisanship. Bush penciled a zinger in his text: "And needless to say, I will not send [the veto] back via the House post office."

There's a simple explanation for why Bush took the plunge on March 20. He suffers from moderate Republican's disease: he has nothing to say. But by noisily giving Congress a March 20 deadline to send him an economic growth bill, he created a situation requiring him to say something. (A White House aide said Bush might ask Congress to extend the deadline, but he was joking.) Marlin Fitzwater, the White House press secretary, had written weeks earlier in his private schedule of coming events that March 20 was the day Bush would declare, "I'm taking things into my own hands." But having said that, Bush would have to say what more he was going to do. He needed an agenda—or at least some themes. So he turned to the only people at the White House and reelection campaign who have one, the Republican branch of the New Paradigm movement. They advocate change, "reform," and a heavy dose of Congress-bashing. Bush swallowed the whole thing, and the speech was one of the best of his presidency.

A case can be made that he merely sought any port in a storm and won't stick with this agenda. I think not. "It's a moment, a defining event," says Jim Pinkerton, a Bush campaign official. Pinkerton has a vested interest in believing this. He's a New Paradigm guru, leader of the activist crowd of young Bush aides who prevailed for the first time on March 20. The group includes William Kristol, Vice President Quayle's chief of staff, congressional liaison Nick Callio, and a slew of domestic policy aides. (Quayle himself is a New Paradigmist.) They were helped by the fact that a sympathizer, budget official Robert Grady, had been asked by Bush campaign chief Robert Teeter to write the March 20 speech. Grady "broke the Darman stranglehold," says a White House associate. Grady's boss, budget director Richard Darman, has been leery of fomenting war with Congress. So have Bush, Teeter, Treasury Secretary Nick Brady, and Sam Skinner, the White House chief of staff.

But the standpatters don't have an agenda, and they know it. Their situation is a lot like the White House staff's in 1979 when President Carter isolated himself at Camp David and choppered in droves of people to talk about America's ills. Pollster Patrick Caddell offered the idea that America was having an anxiety attack, a crisis of confidence. Carter seized on this, returned to the White House, and delivered a speech on the nation's malaise and related themes. It bombed, and Carter's popularity sank. Pinkerton's themes stand a better chance of success. They're more optimistic, future-oriented, appealing in content, and more radical in tone. The only problem is they sound more like Reagan than Bush. But never mind, they're all Bush has. Now he plans to push them aggressively from early spring to the Republican convention in Houston in August.

Bush swiped the "reform" theme from Quayle's stump speech. The president cited five reforms in his March 20 address, and he's going to devote two or three weeks to talking up each one. "He'll concentrate on them with enough repetitiveness to make an impression," says a White House official. He'll start with legal reform, criticizing lawyers and the litigation explosion. Then he'll go to education reform (school choice, high-tech job training), health care reform (a favorite theme of Teeter), and political reform (term limits for Congress, elimination of PACs). The fifth reform, free trade and competitiveness, was added at the instigation of Clayton Yeutter, the White House domestic policy czar. It's important to provide "a link between changing the world and changing America," the official says. It also gives Bush an excuse to talk about his strength, foreign policy.

Bush was urged by the New Paradigm set to take two unilateral steps to boost the economy and twit Congress: cut the tax on capital gains by exempting the amount of gain due to inflation, and assert inherent presidential authority to employ a line-item veto. There was no way Bush could do either, however, after Attorney General William Barr advised they weren't constitutional. In fact, in his confirmation hearing last fall Barr said publicly that he'd "found no basis for an inherent line-item veto in the Constitution."

OK, the activists said, we've got an alternative, the line-item recission. It was suggested, campaign officials say, by Michael Horowitz, a top aide under David Stockman in President Reagan's budget office and now a Washington lawyer. Recissions are spending cuts in individual programs. If Congress ignores a recission request from the president, it dies. That's what Congress normally allows to happen. However, Horowitz recalled the one-fifth rule that requires a vote when 20 percent of House members request it. Almost 100 Republicans immediately said they'd be willing to demand votes. So Bush dispatched sixty-eight recissions on March 20 and intends to send four or five more clusters of them to Congress this year. It's a ploy that lets Bush jab Congress, a ripe target, and play up the popular theme of excessive government spending.

Despite the trappings, Bush hasn't adopted the full Truman strategy that Pinkerton relishes, namely a protracted assault on Congress for blocking solutions to the country's problems. I'd call it a modified Truman. In his March 20 speech, Bush denounced "the status quo Congress" as "out of control" and argued that "the Democratic leadership" is the enemy of change. Callio, the chief White House lobbyist on Capitol Hill, discovered that no president since Truman had vetoed a major tax bill, and Bush gleefully noted that too. He said "our congressional system is broken," strong language for a guy who's pals with House Speaker Tom Foley and Dan Rostenkowski, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. But there won't be a steady diet of this. Bush doesn't have the stomach for stomping on Congress as relentlessly as Truman did.

Even a modified Truman strategy marks a change at the White House. The young activists won by default.

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They even got their slogan enshrined as the tag line for the Bush campaign. Bush closed his speech by saying, "If we can change the world, we can change America." This line is from Jeff Eisenach, executive director of GOPAC, House Republican Whip Newt Gingrich's political action committee. It joins foreign and domestic policy and captures the notion of change. Eisenach passed it on last January to Pinkerton, who mentioned it to Peggy Noonan as she was writing Bush's State of the Union address. She included it. Then the line was used in Bush TV spots in Georgia and Michigan. Fitzwater liked it so much he put it in the written statement issued on Super Tuesday under Bush's name. As of March 20, it's official. •

Daddy's a Palestinian, Mommy's a Democrat.

ANCESTORS

By A.L. Motzkin

"Stay healthy and write, dear Motzkin, when you'll arrive for another visit. Helena is recuperating fast, and little Enya is getting more wondrous from day to day. She already knows about Zionism and says again and again, 'I am a Palestinian. Dr. Herzl and Daddy are also Palestinians, and Mommy is a Democrat.'"

Thus ends a letter written on December 31, 1897, from Shmaryah Levin to my grandfather, Leo Motzkin. Levin and Motzkin were then both 30 years old. Several months earlier Motzkin was a delegate to the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. Levin was at that time a "government rabbi" in Grodno, now in Belarus, and Motzkin, a writer and journalist in Berlin, was preparing for his first trip to the land of Israel. He had been charged by the 37-year-old leader of the Zionist movement, Theodor Herzl, with reporting on the early Jewish settlements, then located primarily in the plains and lower hills of Judea and Samaria.

As another letter written a few months later makes clear, the two friends were uncertain that Herzl "was the right man ... to head our sacred enterprise." Motzkin and Levin, who had been working to raise Jewish national consciousness since their Berlin student days in the mid-1880s, worried that Herzl might be insufficiently "Palestinian," that is, committed to a Jewish homeland in Palestine. In fact, there was good cause for their worries. A few years later Herzl brought before the Zionist congress a proposal, suggested by the British Foreign Office, to establish without delay a Jewish national home in the highlands of East Africa.

The Foreign Office proposal was rejected, and the Palestinians won. They argued, successfully, that the immediate re-establishment of a Jewish national entity was of paramount importance, both for the sake of dignity and to save the impoverished Jews of central and eastern Europe, who were under constant threat of forfeiting body, soul, or both. The Palestinians believed they would claim the loyalty of the Jews and the support of the world only if they endeavored to regain the Jewish ancestral homeland.

The problem was that Jews lacked the usual trappings of nationhood: a territory and a common vehicle of discourse. What they shared was rather a memory of Jerusalem, of Bethlehem, David's birthplace and Rachel's tomb, and Hebron, the hills of Ephraim, and the Valley of Shiloh. Their common bond, expressed in prayers by Jews everywhere, consisted of hoping for God to "blow the horn of our liberation, reassemble our exiles [to the land of Zion],... and re-establish our rulers as from before." If this could be done, it would be only in the land about which Jeremiah prophesied.

The other day Shmaryah Levin's grandson and I were musing over the words of his Aunt Enya. She was barely 4 at the time, and what she meant was that her mother, Helena Kohnheim, was a supporter of the clandestine democratic movement in czarist Russia. The Democrats believed that Jews ought to expend their energy to improve their lot wherever they happened to reside—as against her father and Dr. Herzl, who saw that solution as neither possible nor desirable. "Palestinian" was then, and for many years thereafter, a synonym for "Zionist."

Arabs who then lived in the territory believed that Palestine was the land of the Jews as well. In a memoir published in Boston before World War I, *When I Was a Boy in Palestine*, Mousa J. Kaleel, an Arab born in Ramallah at about the same time Enya Levin was born, writes, "The Jews are strangers in *their land.*" There is no such thing as Palestine, an Arab witness told one of His Majesty's Commissions of Inquiry after one of the several Arab uprisings before World War II. "Palestine is an invention of the Jews." And he was right. It was the Jews who created or "invented" Palestine as a meaningful entity toward the end of the second millennium B.C.

When she was prime minister of Israel, Golda Meir created a flap when she came out with the statement, "There are no Palestinians." Some time later, in the Herzliya garden of the Philippine ambassador to Israel (across the road from the suburb Kfar Shmaryahu, named after Shmaryah Levin), I asked her to elaborate. "I don't understand," she said in her deep, smoke-parched voice, "how anyone can accuse me of denying any person's humanity. You know what I meant: 'Palestine' is a name of a territory, not a nation. There are Jews and there are Arabs. The world must understand that the Palestinian Jews got their—small—share of Palestine which they named Israel, and the Palestinian Arabs got their lion's share, and named it 'Jordan.' Of course, you know I am not a Revisionist, and I do not believe in 'not one inch.'"

Just about two years to the day before the First Zionist Congress, on August 26, 1895, Shmaryah Levin, then in Warsaw, wrote Leo Motzkin in Berlin. Levin was already

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working for the Palestinian, i.e., Zionist, cause: "There is not even one Palestinian in Warsaw, except for a few Lithuanian Jews.... How can we make battle against [the anti-national camp]? Jews will always follow any false prophet preaching in the name of justice and progress, who will promise [the Jews] shamelessly and with unbridled chutzpah a better future Here and Now. What, then, can a Palestinian say to the Jewish masses? We must point out that the troubles of the Jews, as such, do not result from economic conditions, and that the Jews of Russia must not get mixed up in politics."

The young friends, Levin and Motzkin, had attempted unsuccessfully, even before 1895, to organize a Zionist congress. That had to wait for Herzl, who had yet to demonstrate to them that he was a true Palestinian.

In the meantime, little Enya, Levin's first child, was doing well. "Our daughter is developing beautifully," reports her father. "Not, naturally, in the spirit of Socialism." The 2-year-old would grow up to become a Palestinian, like her Daddy, her Daddy's friend Motzkin, and Dr. Herzl.

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Saddam's continuing threat.

STILL STANDING

By Laurie Mylroie

It's been a year since the White House gave Saddam Hussein the green light to crush the revolts that swept Iraq immediately after Desert Storm. Ambiguity had existed over whether the United States would shoot down Saddam's helicopters, as it had shot down fixed-wing aircraft that were flying in violation of the provisional cease-fire. When the administration announced on March 26 that the helicopters would not be touched, the Kurds became the first victims of Saddam's retaliation. Turkish President Turgut Ozal called the clarification a "big help" to Saddam. And it was. With Iraqi gunships bearing down, firing phosphorous and napalm, the Kurds fled. President George Bush left for a Florida vacation.

That decision marked the unraveling of Bush's Saddam policy. A coup would never take place while Saddam was fighting off the Kurds and Shiites, hard-core Arabists advising the president counseled. As one of them told *The Washington Post*, "The rebellion is strengthening Saddam, not weakening him.... No military is going to overthrow him while they are fighting a rebellion." Hence, the Bush administration decided to let Saddam put down the rebellion in order to facilitate a coup.

But the idea that letting Saddam strengthen himself in the short run would weaken him in the long run was not only extremely dubious. Its immediate consequences were appalling: hundreds of thousands of Kurds crowded in the Turkish mountains. Yet the administration sought to strike a neutral posture. "We condemn atrocities and violence on all sides," said White House Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater. From then on, the administration ceased to say much about Saddam's atrocities, apparently believing that to do so would inhibit the hoped-for coup. For the same reason, it turned aside the European Community's call the next month for war crime trials against Saddam.

The administration's hope that the war would produce a coup soon turned into a hope that sanctions would precipitate one. And even though Saddam's position is infinitely better today than a year ago, the administration clings to that hope. However, sanctions do not affect Saddam's base much. In fact, they are transferring wealth to the upper class from the middle class, which sells its property to buy food at astronomical prices as the "elite" profits from the widespread economic dislocation. Reuters' Bernd Debusman, recently returned from Baghdad, told me that Toyota spare parts are scarce, but not Mercedes parts. Luxuries such as caviar are easily had, and the lists of imported wine in first-class restaurants are longer than before the war.

Meanwhile, the United States' other main goal—eliminating Iraq's means of mass destruction—is also far from realization. U.S. policy, in other words, has become incoherent. The means are exceedingly unlikely to secure the goals. The shortcomings are compounded by unspeakable callousness. There are two key U.N. resolutions. Resolution 687 provides for eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction; 688 "demands" Baghdad end the "repression" of its population. Washington has acted as if enforcing 688 interferes with 687. As last year's Kurdish crisis mounted, Washington delayed consideration of 688 until after the passage of 687, despite the urgency of halting Saddam's assault on the Kurds and the lack of urgency concerning 687. The administration's extreme pragmatism, the concern for "stability," generated Washington's priorities regarding the fracturing Soviet Union: the White House had scarcely any concern beyond assuring that nuclear weapons remained under control. Richard Nixon exposed the shallowness of that policy in his recent, strategically distributed memo. It is equally pertinent to Iraq, where the administration also focuses on weapons, ignoring the regime that makes them.

The U.N.'s Special Rapporteur on Human Rights reported more than a month ago that Iraqi human rights violations "are so grave and are of such a massive nature that since the Second World War few parallels can be found.... The number of victims... is certainly in the hundreds of thousands, if not higher." He called for swift action, "considering the fact that thousands of persons are in danger." The administration, however, has yet to move.

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The Kurds suffer an internal embargo that allows them only 10 percent of rations given other citizens. With Baghdad's loss of authority in the north, new evidence has emerged that suggests the regime engaged in killing and destruction "on a much more systematic basis and on a larger scale than we had previously known," according to Middle East Watch, which suggested that "crimes against humanity," i.e., genocide, may have been committed.

Outgoing U.N. Ambassador Thomas Pickering recently assailed Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz over Iraqi violations of 688. But Bush and his top aides have yet to utter one word in protest. If the United States was ready to attack suspected Iraqi weapons sites for violations of 687, why not also demand Saddam lift the blockade on the Kurds, in accordance with 688, and bomb troops maintaining the blockade if Iraq refuses?

This attitude at the top encourages cynicism below, reinforcing the mindless amorality of U.S. policy. As one bureaucrat commented last year after the March 26 announcement, "The Kurds are nice people, but they're losers." Another advised, "Americans don't know the difference between Kurds and Shiites, and if they did, they wouldn't care."

And some are motivated by worse than cynicism. Stephen Pelletiere, an analyst at the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute, recently published *The Kurds and Their Aghas*. It reads like holocaust revisionism. For example, this is how he explains events in Kurdistan last March from triumphal uprising to panicked flight: "This could not have occurred with any other people than the Kurds—a situation where the population seemingly unified one minute, dissolves into chaos the next. The whole episode, we feel, can be explained on the basis of tribalism. The tribalist Kurds reacted to events in an instinctive fashion." Pelletiere does not mention their fear of chemical weapons, because he denies Baghdad ever used such weapons against them. Were this an isolated case, it might be dismissed as bizarre. The pamphlet, however, was reprinted and endorsed by the Defense Intelligence Agency.

The Shiites get similar treatment. One distressed Shiite opposition figure visiting Washington was recently told by an adviser to the president on Iraqi affairs, "The United States will never let the Shiites rule Iraq." I tried to assure him that that could not possibly be U.S. policy, although his interlocutor spoke with far more authority than I.

These prejudices helped generate the bureaucracy's peculiar obsession with a coup to maintain in power Iraq's "Sunni elite," 20 percent of the population. Who but a racist would speak of South Africa's "white elite," 18 percent of the population? Besides, it is almost impossible to engineer a coup. The Saudis tried it last year, fixing on a dubious figure who claimed that a cousin, the chief of Army Aviation, would carry it out. Although this "plot" was widely known in opposition circles, the cousin has since been twice decorated by Saddam. Riyadh dealt either with a double agent or an incompetent braggart. No outsider can beat Saddam at conspiracies.

U.S. policy needs strategic review, not marginal tinkering. Such a review would likely conclude that there are two ways to remove Saddam: Desert Storm II or a U.S.-backed guerrilla war. If such thoughts are beyond contemplation in an election year, then the administration should at least recognize that Resolutions 687 and 688 are complementary, not antithetical. Enforcing 688 undermines Saddam and redeems us. Last year as Bush denounced a new Hitler, he gave instinctive expression to the notion that justice lends strength to policy, promoting consensus for difficult action and the resolve to see the job through. It was easier to believe him a year ago.

LAURIE MYLROIE is an associate of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, where she wrote *The Future of Iraq*.

Bush's myopic Russian policy.

COLD SHOULDER

By Eugene V. Rostow

George Bush's luck is going through a bad patch. Assailed on the hustings for paying too much attention to foreign policy, he is discovering that world politics is not governed by the rhythm of the American electoral cycle. During the next few weeks he will have to make foreign policy decisions, and perhaps take foreign policy actions, that are bound to complicate his re-election campaign. He cannot avoid a showdown with Saddam Hussein, who is defiantly breaking the cease-fire agreement in the Gulf war. Even more important, change in the territories of the former Soviet Empire presents the United States with immense opportunities—and equally immense risks—that must not be ignored much longer.

Beyond emergency and humanitarian aid, do the United States and the West as a whole have a stake in the reconstruction of Russia, Ukraine, and the other states that have emerged from the collapse? And are the chances for success in these efforts sufficient to justify large-scale assistance? Until now, the administration has been hesitant and equivocal. It is worrying about the wrong questions: Is Yeltsin a transition figure? Can we afford to act? Whether Yeltsin survives or not, the real issue is whether the West can afford *not* to act, and act urgently.

The negative reason for Bush to act now is that the failure of the provisional regimes led by Yeltsin and his fellows could lead to catastrophes like those that engulfed world politics after the western Allies in 1917-18 refused effectively to support Kerensky. The second reason, the positive reason, is that we have a chance to do for Eastern

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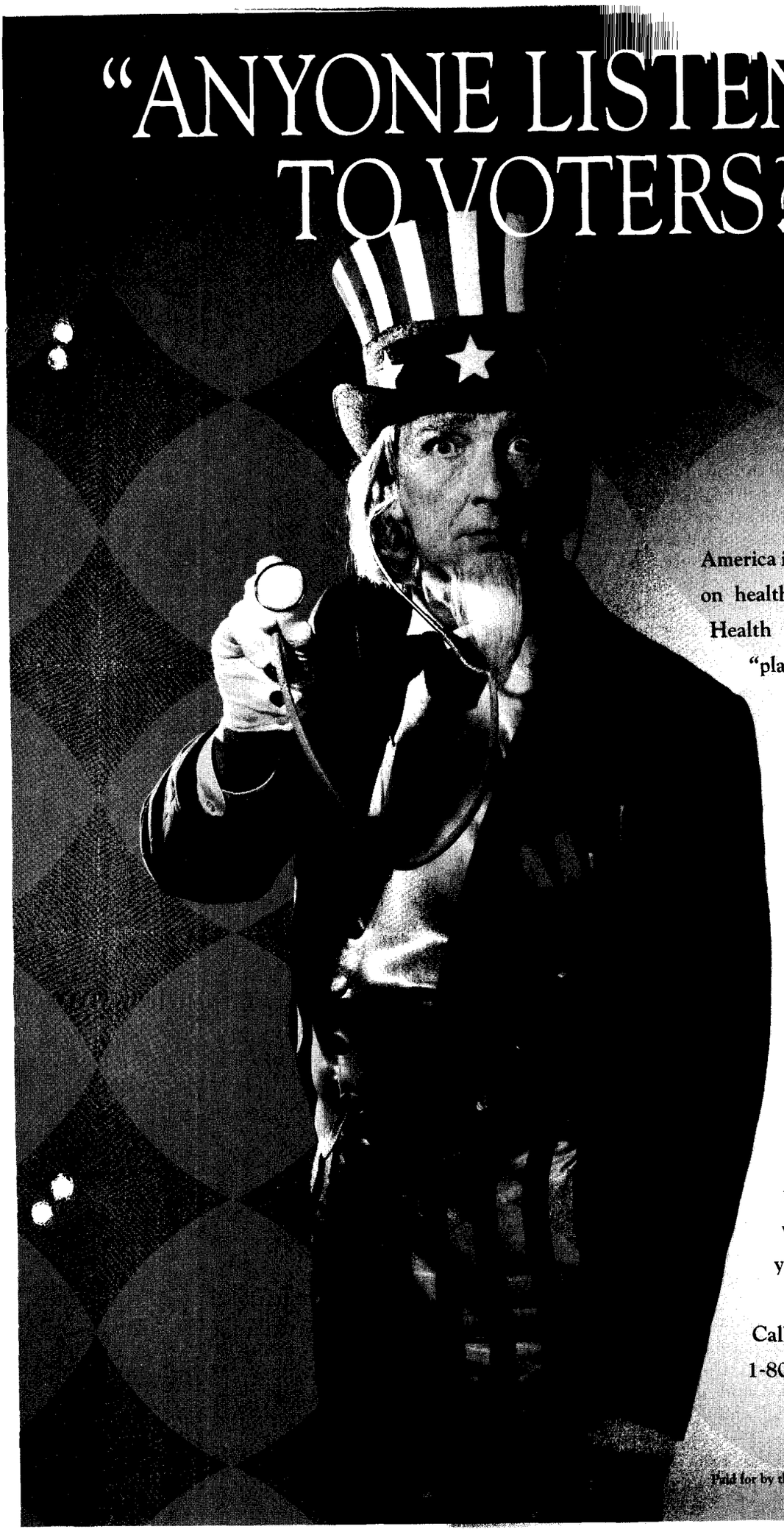
"ANYONE LISTENING TO VOTERS?"



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Europe and Russia what we did for Western Europe, Germany, and Japan after the Second World War. It should never be forgotten that President Truman's offer of the Marshall Plan in 1948 was made to the Soviet Union and its satellites as well as to the Western Allies. At this moment of deepening trouble, the United States has a fleeting opportunity to renew that dramatic offer, this time on behalf of all the industrialized democracies. The purpose would be what it was in 1948: to consolidate an impregnable coalition of like-minded states whose primary interest would be the functioning of the state system as a system of peace.

The failure of the western Allies in 1917 to rescue the new Russian Republic under Kerensky from Lenin's coup d'état was surely one of the worst diplomatic mistakes of the twentieth century. One can sympathize with the western statesmen of the day, who had to confront the terrible German spring offensive of 1918. Their armies and peoples were bone-tired after three years of trench warfare. The United States had barely begun to face the realities of world politics, and its armies were just starting to disembark in France. There had been a French mutiny on the western front. And large segments of western opinion were dazzled by the hope that Lenin's seizure of power promised mankind a glowing future.

Giving full weight to these difficulties, it is nonetheless obvious that the Allies should have followed Churchill's advice to put down the Bolshevik regime at once. They had every legal and moral right to help a friendly government defeat an insurrection. If they had acted early, the task would not have required much force. Instead, they dithered, procrastinated, and, in the end, did nothing effective. The Bolsheviks consolidated their power after a long civil war. And Mussolini, followed by Hitler and other lesser disciples, consciously imitated the tactics of Lenin and Trotsky, and imposed comparable regimes in Italy, Germany, and many other countries.

Now, facing chaos in the former Soviet Empire, the Western Allies, except for the Germans, seem almost as confused and inadequate as their predecessors after the First World War. But they have none of their excuses. Today the West is rich and confident, after the triumphant vindication of the political, military, and economic policies it has pursued since the time of Truman and Acheson. The Western Alliances are still firm, despite the decline of a visible Soviet threat, and the worldwide capitalist economy is a powerful engine for progress. Yet Western leaders, confronting the challenge of the Soviet collapse, wring their hands while the risk of anarchy and counterrevolution in the East becomes worse by the day.

What is needed is not mysterious. The energy, optimism, and intelligence that produced the recoveries of Western Europe, Japan, and many parts of the Third World after 1945 are there to be mobilized, backed by the habits and institutions that have demonstrated success in international cooperation. If the United States can bring itself to provide the kind of leadership that made possible the Marshall Plan and the rebirth of Germany and Japan as peaceful democracies, the zone of stability in world politics can be radically enlarged, and a condition of genuine peace could become a practical goal for the first time since 1914.

Some large grants will be needed to provide stabilization funds for currencies and for basic infrastructure, such as hospitals. But the bulk of the funds needed to surmount the crisis in Eastern and Central Europe should be provided by private investment, perhaps backed by government guarantees for a time. To attract an adequate flow of funds and entrepreneurship, those countries will have to establish a legal environment favorable to private investment, large and small, domestic and foreign. Thus far, needed legal reforms have been delayed or defeated, especially in Russia. Some of the Eastern states, such as Hungary, have done better. But investing in Eastern Europe is still a slow, hazardous struggle with entrenched bureaucracy. The most important factor in the sabotage of legal reform efforts has been the prevalence of large-scale thefts of state property. A new New Class is being established throughout Eastern and Central Europe, a class of robber barons, the most grandiose episode of its kind since Henry VIII created a new class of rich Tudors by giving them land and buildings stolen from the Church.

The levers of administration are still almost entirely in the hands of the old apparatchiks, often the managers of state-owned factories, distribution facilities, or collective farms. Large investments are now being made by foreign investors who bypass the national authorities and deal directly with factory managers and other local powers: mayors, usually, or other regional officials. These procedures are legally precarious, but some investors are willing to take the risks. Moreover, ships, military equipment, and other state property are being peddled around the world by "joint stock companies" headed by members of the Soviet governing class. The privileged men and women of the Communist elite have no interest in legal reform, which would allow the Russian economy to flourish as it did in the age of Witte and Stolypin. As the chief beneficiaries of the prevailing disorder, the robber barons can be expected to continue resisting new codes under which investors could acquire clear title and a firm basis for future financing without paying bribes.

A certain amount of graft has never in itself been a major block to economic development—surely not in the United States. What is going on during this early period of transition in the East, however, passes beyond the limits of the tolerable. Many larger foreign firms, especially American firms, will be reluctant to invest before the legal codes in the East are genuinely revised—while Western Europeans, more used to doing business in the East, rush in. The United States will have to oppose informal arrangements that in effect discriminate against American investors because of their comparative inexperience and the U.S. law that prohibits overseas bribery. It is hard to imagine a less favorable development for America's national security interests than the economic recovery of Russia and Eastern Europe being accomplished in an almost exclusive partnership with

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Germany or the European Community as a whole. As Thomas Jefferson wrote long ago, "It cannot be in our interest to have all Europe reduced to a single monarchy."

Thus far, the Bush administration has shied away from programs designed to help Eastern Europe achieve a modern economy on the ground that they are beyond our capabilities. This attitude is yet another symptom of the moral and intellectual sterility of conventional economics in the United States. In our enthusiasm for the free market and the principle of comparative advantage, we show signs of allowing the pendulum to swing too far. The competitive market is a wondrous device for guiding the allocation of resources, but it is not a perpetual motion machine or a religion, and unaided, it won't save Russia and Eastern Europe. Even perfectly competitive markets require not only the contracyclical influence of fiscal and monetary policy, but also the occasional intervention of common sense.

EUGENE V. ROSTOW is author of the forthcoming *Toward A Managed Peace: The National Interest of the United States, 1759-* (Yale University Press).

Why GM can't compete in Tokyo.

DRIVE SHAFT

By Jonathan Rauch

American manufacturing is a huge and diverse sector, which, despite what everybody says, is currently enjoying a boom in productivity, output, and exports. But the auto industry is very sick, and it accounts for three-fourths of our trade deficit with Japan. Thus when people talk about the U.S.-Japan trade crisis, they mainly mean the U.S.-Japan automotive-trade crisis. At the symbolic center of this dispute are steering wheels.

The Japanese drive on the left side of the road, so obviously they expect the steering wheel to be on the right side of the car. As of right now, none of the Big Three sells a U.S.-made righthand-drive car in Japan. General Motors says it has plans to begin selling righthand-drive Saturns there by the mid-1990s. Chrysler expects to sell a righthand-drive Jeep Cherokee, a big land-rover sort of affair, as early as this fall—"just to ensure that we have tried everything," Chrysler's Alisa Learner Maher said in a recent letter to *The Washington Post.* Ford says it will make a righthand-drive version of its Probe for sale in Japan and Britain sometime next year, with unspecified other models, presumably including the Taurus, to follow. GM also sells about 3,000 European-made Opels each year in Japan; those are available in both drives, with righthanded units accounting for about half the sales. (Status-seekers and curio collectors buy the other half.) Ford sells 70,000 to 80,000 righthand-drive Mazdas in Japan, but those are Japanese cars with Ford nameplates.

On its face, the Big Three's behavior—that is, competing in Japan without righthand-drive cars—seems bizarre. What accounts for it? To move the steering wheel from one side of the car to the other sounds trivial, but it's not. It requires redesigning the dashboard, moving the floor pedals and gearshift, rearranging the connecting assemblies, and so on. The adjustments cost a lot of money, which is exactly what the Big Three don't have right now. "To re-engineer any kind of model to righthand-drive does take a tremendous amount of engineering effort," says GM's Grey Terry, a company spokesman. "If we have the slightest glimmer of a market that justifies this kind of engineering expense, we'll do it."

The Big Three say they do not have such a glimmer. As of now, they possess less than half of a percent of the huge Japanese car market. Why? Partly because of image and quality problems, and partly because they don't have cars to fit the market, as everyone, including Detroit, well knows. Even apart from steering wheel placement, says one Big Three official, "for the most part, our cars really aren't designed for Japanese tastes. Our cars really aren't quite right, though we're making progress."

But there are also distribution problems that are not the Big Three's fault. Car dealerships in Japan are mostly owned by the Japanese auto companies. Toyota, Nissan, and Honda dealers typically won't sell competitors' cars, even though they benefited from U.S. antitrust rulings in the '40s that forced the Big Three to drop their own exclusive-dealing clauses. In Japan, therefore, the Big Three sell cars through various import dealers and partnerships, but that's small beer. So why not build an independent dealer network? Because, given Japan's ridiculous land prices, the costs are enormous. Foreign companies that do offer righthand-drives still don't sell very many (though they do better than Detroit). So why make the investment to produce a car you can't sell? "If we did that without some guarantee of volume," says Chrysler's Maher, "we'd be less astute than they give us credit for."

What the Big Three are saying, basically, is that the steering wheel isn't the real issue; the issue is that the market in Japan is exorbitantly expensive to enter, and thus effectively closed. If it weren't, they would make the cars.

Does this wash? Sort of. There is no doubt that Americans have a harder time distributing cars in Japan than Japanese did thirty years ago in America. But there is also no doubt the Japanese tried much harder in America than Americans ever have in Japan. For a start, they learned the language, something American executives in Japan often don't do. Then they worked tirelessly to understand and satisfy the American customer. They developed distributorships one at a time, often in the face of resistance from the Big Three. "Don't kid your-

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self," says Walter E. Huizenga, president of the American International Automobile Dealers Association. "I will tell you that there were a lot of Chevrolet dealers that showed a lot of Honda reps to the door."

In short, the Japanese companies made a huge investment here and persevered. For instance, Mitsubishi Motor Sales of America has invested $400 million in the American market since landing here in 1982, according to Richard D. Recchia, the company's chief operating officer. "We never had any dual dealers," he says. "I had to start from scratch." No sooner did Mitsubishi begin selling here than it got hit with an allegedly "voluntary" 30,000-car import quota. Mitsubishi thus not only had to build distributorships here, it had to build *factories*. Was that "fair"?

Mitsubishi's American plants can turn out lefthand-drive Galants for America and righthand-drive Galants for Japan, one right after another on the same assembly line. "You build that capability from the beginning of the design process," says John Campbell of the University of Michigan. "And the American car companies just don't think that way."

Any honest observer has to sympathize with both sides. The Big Three's posture in Japan is almost indefensible, yet the obstacles facing them there are almost insuperable. Moreover, the Japanese increasingly feel that the Americans are demanding handouts, and the Americans increasingly feel they have been played for fools.

Most of the ideas for getting around the impasse are bad. Today some people are talking about "affirmative action"—set-aside programs, basically—for the Americans. Negotiating some fixed share of the Japanese market would invite the Big Three to sit complacently on their quota without learning to compete. Detroit already has enough image problems in Japan—and in America—without being despised as a charity case. And what happens when Japanese companies make reciprocal demands, or when other American industries demand their own affirmative action?

Others, notably Chrysler, want to limit Japanese market share in America, "at least [says Chrysler] until the Japan home market reflects significant import penetration." But capping Japanese companies' sales would hardly make Detroit more competitive in Japan. It would hurt the many Americans who rely on good foreign cars. And it won't save the Big Three anyway, because the Japanese are producing more and more of their cars here.

The only real solution will take time. When I was in Japan in 1990, American car-company executives posted there complained that they couldn't get the attention of the head office in Detroit. Now these same people say Detroit is starting to discover Japan. GM appears to be getting the message. In March it launched its first major print-advertising campaign in Japan. Its Saturn plant in Tennessee is being geared to produce both lefthand- and righthand-drive models on, yes, the same assembly line. Necessity, not vision, is driving the change. One GM official explains that, with market share dropping in the United States and sales (and profits) slowly rising in Japan, GM can no longer afford to ignore the world's second-largest market.

But the millennium won't come so long as Chrysler talks about selling righthand-drive cars in Japan as "trying everything" rather than doing the obvious minimum. The steering-wheel issue shows starkly that though the Big Three have some legitimate beefs about Japan, their self-righteousness is unwarranted. Like the man who grouses about unemployment but declines to look for work, Detroit has yet to earn the right to complain.

JONATHAN RAUCH is the author of *The Outnation: A Search for the Soul of Japan*, published this month by Harvard Business School Press.

What a Kinnock victory would mean for Clinton.

FRUITS OF LABOUR

By Hugo Young

One year ago it seemed unimaginable that the ascendancy of the right in either American or British politics might soon be coming to an end. The Gulf war, recently over, had bestowed priceless military éclat on two of the least convincing warrior-leaders, George Bush and John Major. They were unchallenged by any credible opponents among their domestic rivals. In Bush's case it seemed there might not be a serious challenger at all, so fearful was any Democrat of wrecking his chances in '96 by being obliterated in '92. In the case of Major, his opponent was all too visible: Neil Kinnock, the Welsh windbag, leader of the Labour Party since 1983, longest-serving opposition leader in British history, a proven failure. Kinnock, it was assumed in most corners of the British establishment as recently as January, had no chance of becoming prime minister.

The estimate is now being sharply revised. Bush, though still the favorite, is now far from a shoe-in. And in Britain the chance of a party changeover may be better than even. Moreover it exists in a context few people had predicted: Labour goes into the April 9 election with a more distinctively leftist program than was once thought possible or prudent. At very best, Major can expect a small majority, way down from the 101-seat lead he inherited from the 1987 election, with consequent damage to his political authority. More likely is a "hung" Parliament without majority control.

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A First Grader's Day in Sendai

BY ALBERT SHANKER, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

When people reach for quick and easy ways to fix what's wrong with our schools, they often talk about extending the school day and the school year so kids will learn more. They point to the superior performance of students in Japan, for example, where the school year is 12 weeks longer than ours, and where kids go to school for eight hours a day, with a half day on Saturday. How could being in school that much longer *not* make a big difference in learning?

But a new book, *The Learning Gap: Why Our Schools Are Failing and What We Can Learn from Japanese and Chinese Education* (New York: Summit Books, 1992), by Harold W. Stevenson and James W. Stigler, reminds us that you can't just pick up a piece from another system without understanding how it works there.

Stevenson and Stigler are psychologists who have been studying first and fifth graders in Minneapolis; Chicago; Sendai, Japan; Taipei, Taiwan; and Beijing since the mid 1970s. They agree that spending more time in schools contributes to the success of Japanese and Chinese students, but not for the reasons supporters of this idea think. Japanese and Chinese schools don't use the longer school day to cram more into students' heads, Stevenson and Stigler tell us; they use it to give children more time to play and engage in non-academic activities.

More time in school contributes to Asian students' success, but not for the reasons most people think.

The differences between the amount of time Asian and American children spend in school are impressive. By the time the children Stevenson and Stigler studied have reached sixth grade, they've had the equivalent of one to two more years of school than their American counterparts. But little if any of this extra time is spent in the classroom. The Asian first and fifth graders Stevenson and Stigler observed had a 15-minute recess after every academic class period. Their school day also included generous lunch breaks and time for extracurricular activities. Elementary school students in Beijing, for example, had 50 minutes a day for recess, an hour and a half for lunch and one hour for an after-school program. Stevenson and Stigler contrast this with the American kids they observed, who had one or two recesses, a lunch period of an hour or less and no after-school programs.

What does this mean? Can goofing off on the playground really contribute to the academic success of Asian students? Stevenson and Stigler believe that there is a direct link: "During these recess periods, children go outside for vigorous play at Ping-Pong, hopscotch, badminton, jump rope, basketball, and other games. Children are noisy, active, energetic, and interactive." And allowing kids to run and play may make it easier for them to settle down when they are in class: "Western visitors to Asian classrooms often comment on the children's rapt attention. Their ability to focus so closely on academic activities may be due partly to their frequent opportunities during recesses to relax, socialize, and escape from the demands of the classroom."

It's ironic that our stereotype of Asian schoolchildren is of passive, repressed kids who are glued to their desks, when, as Stevenson and Stigler point out, it's American kids who have to sit at their desks for hours on end: "Only after school is over do they have time to play and thereby to reduce the tensions created by sitting in the classroom." This is something we don't even expect of adults—at least not in a decent workplace. And Stevenson and Stigler wonder how much this strait-jacket approach to schooling has to do with some of our kids' problems: "Complaints about hyperactivity and irrelevant activity among American children offer clear cues that we are asking children to sit still for too many hours every day.... One wonders how often the currently popular biological explanations of behavior disorders result in diagnoses of minimal brain damage in children who simply need to have more opportunities for physical exercise and release of tension."

Allowing kids too little time to run around and play with other kids at school intensifies another problem Stevenson and Stigler see in American schools: isolation. We like to think of ourselves as a gregarious people. But when we compare American schoolchildren with Asian, we see that our kids are likely to have a solitary and rather lonely time in school. Many come from a distance and go right back home after school. If they don't have friends from their neighborhood at school, a 15-minute recess won't give them a chance to make any. And the way our classes are typically structured ensures that students are isolated in the classroom, too. Unlike classes in Japanese and Chinese schools, where students most often solve problems together, either as a whole class or in small groups, our students tend to work by themselves. This might mean listening to the teacher and answering the teacher's questions or doing desk work, with or without the teacher's help. In any case, our system does not offer kids much chance to meet, mingle, interact and work with other kids, in class or out.

Unlike some of the people who recommend the extended school day and school year, Stevenson and Stigler are not claiming that changing the amount of time kids spend in school would put an end to our problems. Their discussion of this subject is a tiny part of *The Learning Gap* in which they also talk about teachers and teaching, curriculum and the role of parents. Anyway, Stevenson and Stigler are not interested in presenting Asian schools as models to be copied; they want to show us how these schools work so we can look back at our own schools and see them more clearly. But I'll have more to say about their fascinating and useful book in a future column.

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For certain, a new national mood will be defined by the result: a mood for which Kinnock, against all recent odds, may turn out to speak with winning conviction. Just as Margaret Thatcher, elected in 1979, proved a kind of Baptist for Ronald Reagan, Kinnock in April '92 could prove the precursor for President Clinton.

Victory outright is unlikely. But leadership in a hung Parliament would be almost as extraordinary. For nine years no public figure has been more reviled than Kinnock. Ridicule and loathing, contempt and coarse laughter, none of the weaponry of British condescension was spared in the effort to make him seem unelectable. This campaign, mercilessly pursued by the tabloid press, sprang from the heart of Thatcherite England, which considered the Labour leader a voice from the class-bound, union-bound, life-depleting past. It was the scorn that hurt him most. He was held up as uneducated—a poor degree in industrial relations from the University of Wales—and pitifully inexperienced. Other Labour leaders—Clement Attlee, Harold Wilson, James Callaghan—took their punches from the political class. But they were seldom denied wary respect. Only in the last three weeks, with Labour maintaining parity or better in the pre-election polls, has the same commodity been apportioned to Kinnock.

Some criticisms are based on indestructible truth. Kinnock is easily knocked off stride by any competent economic interrogation lasting more than five minutes. Figures are not his strong suit. When he is asked for Labour's analysis of the government's public spending deficit or the finer details of his own party's tax policies, you sometimes sense a man operating at the limit of his competence. Nor has he spent the long years out of office equipping himself with a mastery of foreign affairs, still less with a vision of how the post-Soviet world ought to be arranged. His entire contact with government has been of an adversarial nature, whether as a youthful far-left rebel against the enforced caution of the Wilson government in the '70s or as a spectator across the dispatch box from the Thatcher revolution.

This, perhaps, is what made him seem incredible. So long in opposition, he seemed fit only to remain there. But now, rather suddenly, he looks like somebody else. Strange to say of a man not yet 50, he resembles a kind of Godfather: the party boss par excellence, who knows where every body is buried not least because he fitted the concrete boots, and whose power feeds on his success. What no one can take away from Kinnock is that he reformed his party, purged it of hard left excesses, reduced the influence of unrepresentative trade unions, and found himself with a new generation of young political allies, unmarked by failure, who will operate his government if he should win. He is their patron, their *capo*. It would be hard to exaggerate the psychic effect on him of a victory that for so long had been thought impossible.

If this occurred, however, it would hardly be attributable to one man or even one party. Kinnock still runs behind Major in the popular estimation of attractiveness and competence. But what is interesting about this campaign is how much it has told us about the mood of Britain, perhaps echoing the mood elsewhere in this recessionary time. The '80s were a decade for incumbents, whether of left or right. In France and Australia the nominal left was as immovable as the right in the United States and Britain. But incumbents are now having a hard time everywhere.

The Tories were more taken by surprise than most. As they contemplated an election they could have held anytime during the last year, they comforted themselves with the belief that the political world they owned had not shifted. The liberalism (in the European sense) of the '80s that supplanted the collectivism of the postwar period continued to dominate political attitudes. There was no public appetite for change comparable with the appetite Thatcher identified and began to satisfy thirteen years ago. Therefore, ministers argued, the huge step of reverting to a Labour government was one the British people would not take. Added to this was the collapse of Soviet socialism. Fukuyama-like, Conservatives believed that history had stopped with the pendulum safely in their hands. A decade of Thatcher's personal propaganda had declared there was no essential difference between the socialism of Moscow and Manchester, so when Moscow was routed Manchester could safely be counted out as well.

But after 1987 Kinnock and Labour drastically changed the content and the form of British socialism, a word that does not appear in their 1992 election manifesto. Labour is no longer a party of public ownership. It has even abandoned an earlier pledge to renationalize privatized utilities such as telephones and electricity. Further afield there have also been definitive apostasies. The first post-cold war election is being fought with Labour more committed to maintaining nuclear deterrence than in any election when the cold war made it necessary; and the party has avoided putting any figure on prospective cuts in defense spending. And it has also joined the European mainstream. In 1983 its platform promised to take Britain out of the European Community. Now it contemplates a single European currency and other moves toward closer union with more equanimity than half the Tory party.

These are more than minor adjustments. They concern core issues of nationhood and political purpose issues on which Labour's evolution remains largely unexplained. When I asked Kinnock about this on the day his campaign started, he said that a systematic, open debate culminating in some binding testament from the leader would have led to disaster. The party would have destroyed itself with "internecine ideological struggle." It all had to be done by indirection: even, he implied, by calculated evasion. But what this exercise did not do was explain how the nuclear disarmer became the nuclear defender without forfeiting,

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somewhere along the line, respect for his judgment. The country still has not fully understood it.

The Tories' confidence, however, was overshadowed by something more than Labour's move toward the center. Every week in the last four months of 1991 was marked by predictions from one minister or another that the recession was about to end. The "green shoots" of recovery were now showing. The economy would turn round next week, or was it the week after. Every policy was now in place for blast-off. On this basis, Major decided not to hold the election last November, when many advised him to. And since the Tories were then 4 percent behind in the polls, his decision seemed prudent. But as it is, he faces a country in the same resentful mood of unrecovery that may dispose of Bush.

Labour's strength is based on that ineluctable fact. Oppositions win elections less often than governments lose them. But something else also suggests itself: the possibility that Labour under Kinnock is the party most consonant with the post-Thatcherite, and also (dare one say it) the post-socialist, tide of the 1990s.

One trend the British no longer seem to follow is the Thatcherite view of government and the state. Thatcher vowed to get the government out of government. Private choice, mediated by market power, was her lodestar. This never fully accorded with the priorities of the British, whose continuing propensity to vote Tory arguably had more to do with division and extremism on the left than with devotion to the economic theories of Milton Friedman. The evidence that this alien flirtation may have run its course is to be found not least in the very different bias Major has sought to put on his brand of conservatism. He comes forward with the usual Tory slogans about choice, opportunity, and ownership. But he also believes in the enabling state. He has none of the hard right's hatred of public services, and has embraced such a grossly un-Thatcherite concept as "citizen's rights." He seems to sense that the British remain incorrigibly a nation of social democrats.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

This is a sensible realignment. Through it, Major announces that he is a consolidator, not a revolutionary. But it speaks to a set of national prejudices for which there is a more practiced spokesman, namely Kinnock. A party may sometimes be wise to filch the policies of its rivals. But the tactic risks emphasizing that the other side might do things better. If you can get real social democracy from Neil Kinnock, why buy the appearance of it from John Major? Especially when Major has been sitting, impotent, close to the source of a recession that makes people frightened for their jobs and houses?

Well, one reason may be the vestige of true socialism that does remain at the heart of Kinnock's project. This has been the surprise. The campaign, unusually long by British standards, has been helpful in extracting policy details from all sides. Not the least of these have concerned Labour's plans for personal taxation, which reveal a party still committed to the swingeing redistribution of income. More than 4 million people will pay more tax if Labour gets to power. Labour calls many of these people rich, and will hit them accordingly. But there is some dispute about the meaning of words here. The marginal tax rate will be 49 percent at $40,000, 59 percent at $61,000. Although millions more, many of them pensioners, will be slightly better off as a result, these figures could still be enough to swing the campaign Major's way. The Tories have announced their intention of focusing on them every day, to the exclusion of most other issues. After all, this assault on upward mobility challenges the essence of what they stand for. But their furious charge is taking time to impress the voters. So far the recession has been too strong for it—the recession and Kinnock's ability to summon up an ordered passion in favor of values that Thatcher thought she had extinguished.

HUGO YOUNG, a columnist for *The Guardian* of London, is the author of *The Iron Lady* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), a biography of Margaret Thatcher.

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How Immigration became a nightmare.

THE INS MESS

By Weston Kosova

"No, no, I do not know what is the number of the form. It is the one for a person who has a family to bring to the country. Do you have that one? The one for relatives?... No. I tell you. I do not know the number of the form."

It was early afternoon on a Wednesday in December, and the line at the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service's regional office in Northern Virginia was backed up to the door. A fortyish man at the head of the line, a Pakistani, had been pleading his case for nearly five minutes to an agitated clerk, who shifted on her stool behind the high counter.

"Sir, like I told you, you've got to give me more to go on than that," the clerk said. "You see how many forms I've got sitting back here? I need the *number*." She called the next person in line.

Despite her insistence, the clerk did know which form the man wanted: after the line dissipated, I walked up to the same window and, in flawless Midwestern, asked for "the form you need to bring a family member here from another country to live." Without so much as a question she reached back to the stack of papers behind her and handed over INS I-130, Petition for Alien Relative—the most commonly requested of INS forms.

Incidents like this are familiar to anyone who has encountered the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Mention the INS to a recent immigrant or someone trying to get a green card or work permit and you will see eyes roll. Xenophobic paper pushers are just a small part of the problem. Every immigrant has his own tales of lost forms, ill-trained inspectors, usurious fees, arbitrarily enforced rules, and notoriously sluggish bureaucracy.

In November 1990 the General Accounting Office issued a scathing, 177-page report on the INS that laid bare the Justice Department agency's negligence. "Over the past decade weak management systems and inconsistent leadership have allowed serious problems to go unresolved," the GAO charged. The report revealed how INS employees rigged their work schedules, allowing them to take home as much as $20,000 a year in overtime pay. It described an INS office in Los Angeles that deposited the thousands of dollars in fees it took in each day by mailing the cash to the bank.

The GAO scolding was issued a year after Raymond Momboisse, a senior INS attorney, quit after penning a twenty-two-page internal memo in which he described the agency as "totally disorganized." Among other things, Momboisse revealed that the INS regularly shifted funds from office to office to cover nearly $40 million in overspending, and that it deliberately overhired border patrol guards as a way to pressure Congress for more money.

Momboisse's memo came on the heels of yet another investigation of the INS that had been ordered by then Attorney General Richard Thornburgh. This inspection foreshadowed many of the abuses that the GAO would detail in its report a year later. Thornburgh discovered that the INS had lost 23,059 certificates of citizenship with "an estimated street value ranging from $11 million to $115 million." The Justice Department also charged that INS "data reported for applications received, applicants interviewed, and fees collected were inaccurate and unreliable at all organizational levels."

Shortly after the Justice Department audit, INS director Alan C. Nelson was forced to resign. In his place, President Bush appointed Gene McNary, a St. Louis County executive (and county chairman of Bush's 1988 presidential campaign). At a press conference the day after his confirmation, McNary pledged to clean up the agency and overhaul its management. "I intend to see that it is brought under control and that it is centralized," he said. In the months that followed, McNary pored over the Justice Department report and the Momboisse memo. He ordered the INS's four regional managers to review the offices under their jurisdictions. He acquainted himself with the workings of the vast, 16,000-employee, $1 billion agency.

Yet now, more than two years later, McNary and his crew haven't even begun to reform the INS. McNary came up with a few nutty, ill-fated proposals—requiring all Americans and residents over age 16 to carry national worker-identification cards, offering Nicaraguan refugees cash "loans" to leave the country—but nothing resembling the plan he promised

WESTON KOSOVA, a former TNR reporter-researcher, is an associate editor at the Washington *City Paper*.

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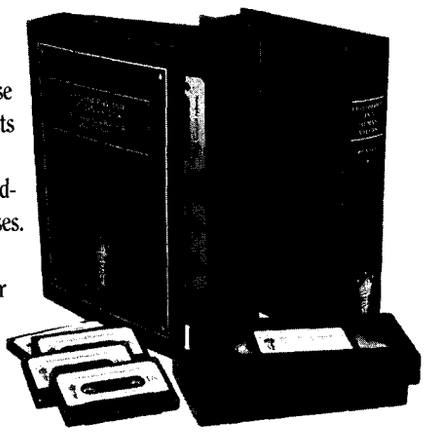

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The contrast begins in ancient Greece where Socrates' student Plato, and Plato's student Aristotle, commence the split in political doctrine that exists with us today. Dr. Dalton next contrasts the "savage noble" of Machiavelli with the "noble savage" of Rousseau.

In the last century, Marx continued the tradition of those who sought to create a better human nature and was rebutted by Freud who argued the future of all such "illusion" about human nature is to end in disappointment and destruction.

Finally, emphatically, in this century these political ideals are tested in the thoughts and deeds of Hitler and Gandhi.

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would bring the agency "under control."

Even if McNary were to set about gauzing the immigration service's various management sores, however, the frustrations immigrants face wouldn't ease. Immigrants are treated shabbily by the INS not only because the agency is careless and inept, but because, despite its name, "immigration" and "naturalization" are not really its first concerns; the INS is far more interested in tracking down and expelling illegal aliens.

"The internal mentality of the INS continues to be one of [law] enforcement, while at the same time the INS tries to maintain a p.r. image of providing public services and immigration benefits," says Ignatius Bau of the San Francisco-based Coalition for Immigration Reform. Among immigration lawyers like Bau, this is commonly referred to as the "cop mentality," an attitude that is borne out in McNary's own assessment of his agency's purpose. In a *Washington Post* profile, McNary said that his top five priorities are: to "gain control of the southern border; increase efforts to deport criminal aliens; put into effect new regulations on granting asylum; enforce sanctions against employers who hire illegal aliens; and update the data processing system." In other words, he considers the INS to be at least four-fifths a police agency.

As a result, the agency's enforcement details are watched closely by top management. The INS maintains twenty-four-hour armed patrols along every open yard of the U.S. border. Under the 1986 Federal Immigration Reform and Control Act, businesses that hire illegal aliens now risk draconian fines. Swift deportation awaits those nabbed without proper papers. Last year the INS rounded up and expelled nearly 1 million illegals.

In contrast to its concerted enforcement effort, the INS only grudgingly administers the other, more mundane half of its responsibility. Since navigating incoming legal immigrants through the labyrinth of immigration laws is of comparatively little concern to agency brass, they don't bother to keep a close watch on how immigration benefits are handled. Instead, INS regional offices around the country are granted virtually a free hand in deciding for themselves how and to whom they should give out green cards, visas, and work permits. Predictably, the result is chaos. In his parting memo, Momboisse compared the INS to "a feudal state with each region, district, and sector acting independently to give its own interpretation to the law."

For example, the city of Chevy Chase sits on the border between Washington, D.C., and Maryland, and is divided by Western Avenue. One side of Western Avenue is considered Chevy Chase, D.C., and falls under the control of the INS regional office in Arlington, Virginia. The other side is considered Chevy Chase, Maryland, and falls under the jurisdiction of the INS office in Baltimore.

Suppose, for instance, that you are a non-American who married a U.S. citizen, which makes you automatically eligible for permanent residence status. If your spouse lives in Chevy Chase, Maryland, you must travel to Baltimore, file the proper documents, and wait nine to twelve months (or longer, depending on the time of year) for an interview from an INS inspector before you will be granted permanent residence papers. During that time, you cannot leave the country for any reason or else you lose your eligibility to return. If, however, your spouse lives across Western Avenue in Chevy Chase, D.C., you will be interviewed by an INS inspector in Arlington the same day that you file your papers. In Baltimore you cannot submit papers without attaching a copy of a birth certificate. In Arlington they don't even ask to see a birth certificate.

Each regional office also decides how many applications it will process a day. The Arlington office typically hands out numbers to the first 125 people in line when it opens in the morning, and turns everyone else away. Lines usually start forming for the next day soon after the office closes in the evening. Other offices compound the problem by accepting applications only two or three days a week. Still others are open during business hours every day and take all comers.

And the rules vary not only from office to office, but often from inspector to inspector within the same office. One recent immigrant from the Philippines told me that after waiting in line from two in the morning until noon to file naturalization papers, he was finally seen by an inspector. "The lady told me that my application was no good," he said. "She told me that I needed to show her my birth certificate, but I didn't have it." The inspector informed him that he would have to come back with his birth certificate before he could file his papers. So the following week he once again waited in line for nearly ten hours. This time he brought his birth certificate and presented it to the inspector—a different one from the week before. "She said I don't need it," he says. "She didn't look at it, even."

Some immigrants, especially those whose English is poor, have taken to hiring lawyers to accompany them to their meetings with INS inspectors, precisely to avoid this sort of frustration. But many immigrants can't afford the immigration service's prohibitive filing fees, let alone attorney's fees. Every INS form has a fee, and every fee must be paid up front. Except under very limited circumstances, there are no waivers of fees for people who cannot afford to pay. And fees are not refunded, even if the application is rejected.

Coming to America isn't cheap. Filing an application with the INS for naturalization costs $90. Becoming a permanent resident runs $120. Requesting permission to bring a foreign relative runs $75. For a work permit, add $50 more. Add to that fees for fingerprinting and photographs that are required for many applications, and in some cases the total for the application alone can top $500 to $600, says Bau, and sometimes reaches into the thousands.

Last year the INS attempted to charge Salvadoran refugees fees totaling $380 when they applied for temporary resident status under a special amnesty program.

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A family of five or more was subject to $1,435 in fees. But under pressure from immigration groups and Joe Moakley, a Democratic representative from Massachusetts, the INS scaled back the fees to $75 per person, $225 for a family of three or more. In order to remain in the country, however, Salvadorans must renew their status every six months, at a cost of $60 per person. And, true to form, the INS refused to pay refunds to those refugees who paid the original $380.

For those who can afford the filing fees, there is still the matter of figuring out which combination of forms is required. There are dozens of combinations governing every possible circumstance under which a person could immigrate.

"How do you immigrate to the United States? A very good question," says INS spokesman Duke Austin. "Very difficult to answer.... I mean, we're talking hundreds of pages of legislation." Indeed, immigration laws are needlessly, often mindlessly, complex. Every few years, in a fit of immigration "reform," Congress trowels a new layer of benefits and restrictions on top of existing legislation, making it more difficult both for immigrants trying to figure out if they qualify to enter the country and for the INS. "I've been working at it for fifteen years," admits Austin, "and there are things that even I don't understand about the law."

For example, under the law there are three broad categories of people who are allowed to immigrate: 1) family members of U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents; 2) people found eligible to work in the United States; and 3) political refugees. A would-be immigrant who doesn't fall into one of these three categories can't immigrate. But even immigrants who do appear to meet the requirements still may not be allowed to enter.

Take the first category. The INS claims that keeping families together is a primary concern, so immediate family members of American citizens or permanent legal residents are eligible for visas without waiting. However, what you consider to be your immediate family and what the immigration laws consider it to be are probably very different. The INS, for instance, does not count brothers or sisters as immediate family. It does not recognize a child either, if he or she is married or over 21. Neither does it consider a husband or wife immediate family if, as INS documents put it, "you were not both physically present at the marriage ceremony, and the marriage was not consummated." The INS considers these family members "restricted."

The distinction is important. While an unlimited number of "immediate" family members are allowed to immigrate each year, "restricted" family are subject to quotas and long waits. Under new immigration laws that went into effect last October, a total of approximately 25,000 restricted family members from each country will be allowed to immigrate this year (up from 20,000 previously). When their eight-digit visa number comes up, they can enter the country. But from many countries thousands more than the limit apply each year, resulting in huge backlogs. For most countries, the wait for restricted relatives now stands at about three years. From Mexico, the wait is nine years. The Philippines tops the list with 12.5 years.

Equally quirky rules apply to immigrants who come to the United States to work. Not everyone is eligible. Immigrant workers must fall under one of the agency's three work "preference" classes. "First Preference" workers, according to the INS, are "aliens with extraordinary ability in the arts, sciences, education, business, or athletics which has been demonstrated by sustained national or international acclaim, or outstanding professors or researchers or certain multinational executives and managers." "Second Preference" workers are essentially the same as First Preference workers but not as famous. "Third Preference" workers are skilled and unskilled laborers, such as fruit pickers, who perform usually low-paying, menial jobs that employers can't find enough Americans to do.

But an immigrant who meets the INS's requirements might still be prevented from immigrating. Suppose that a catering company in New York has its eye on a famed Turkish ice sculptor and wants to hire her full time. She would be eligible to enter the United States under the "extraordinary ability" category, right? Probably not. Because as defined by the immigration laws, extraordinary skills aren't skills that are extraordinary in themselves, but those that no other person in the United States possesses. This means that before a company may bring a foreign citizen here to work, it must prove that it has searched for an American to do the job and failed, usually by posting notices and advertising in newspapers. And the United States already has its share of ice sculptors, many of whom doubtless are unemployed. Even if the ice sculptor is found eligible to immigrate, that still isn't a guarantee she'll get in, since the INS puts a yearly cap of 40,000 on immigrant workers (with the exception of Third Preference workers, who are admitted only when shortages of laborers arise).

Similarly, immigrants applying for green cards as political refugees may be rejected even if technically they are eligible under the law. According to INS Form I-589, Request for Asylum in the United States, "The burden of proof is upon you to establish that you have a well-founded fear of persecution on account of your race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion." The INS defines persecution as "to pursue; to harass in a manner designed to injure, grieve, or afflict; to oppress; specifically, to cause or put to death because of belief."

Sounds fair enough, but that isn't the definition that the government actually applies in deciding who is granted political refugee status. If it were, President Bush wouldn't be summarily turning away the latest wave of Haitian boat refugees, many of whom would qualify. Rather, political refugee status is largely granted not on the basis of persecution itself, but on the basis of which country is doing the persecuting. A 1987 GAO study revealed that the government was far more likely to grant political asylum to refugees from countries hostile to the

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Frontier Justice

Last year my wife and I arrived in the United States after fifteen years abroad in order finally to settle down. The task before us seemed daunting. We needed a car, a house, family health insurance, new bank accounts, new tax status, etc. The car we bought in an afternoon. Although I was self-employed with limited savings, we arranged a mortgage. Health insurance—a typical American nightmare—took a little longer and was more expensive than we had anticipated. Other issues began to resolve themselves. Even the Internal Revenue Service was helpful over the phone. And so polite compared with the Greek and Portuguese tax authorities with whom I was used to dealing. What a wonderful country America is! we thought.

There was just one more detail to arrange: my wife, Maria, is a Canadian citizen, from just over the border in Quebec. She needed working papers from the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Friends who had previous dealings with the INS encouraged us to use a lawyer. I assumed they were being alarmist. "Maria's a Canadian, a former member of the Canadian diplomatic corps, we've been married for eight years with an American-Canadian child. What could be the problem?"

They smiled. "You've never dealt with the INS."

Innocently, I phoned the INS one morning. I listened to prerecorded messages for twenty-three minutes before being cut off. I tried again, and again I was cut off. It took the better part of a morning to get a real human being, who told us that it would be weeks before application papers could be sent out and that we were therefore advised to come in person to Baltimore, since the Washington, D.C., office was "for public relations only."

In Baltimore we got about twenty-five pages of forms that cost $255. Next, my wife needed a blood test that could only be administered by an "INS-approved" doctor, who charged $105. Then there was fingerprinting and photographs by other "INS-approved" entrepreneurs, one of whom repeated the advice of our friends: "Why don't you people use a lawyer?"

Then my wife received her employment authorization card, and she was told that she was now barred from visiting Canada for twelve months, until her permanent residence status was decided upon by an INS examiner. If she crossed the border even for a day to visit her parents, she would have her working papers revoked and become an "excludable alien."

We explained that my wife's family was planning a reunion for the first time in fifteen years, and asked if she could make one weekend visit.

In that case, the official said, my wife "should apply for advance parole."

"Parole?" I said. "My wife didn't commit any crime." The INS official flatly replied, "If she wants to see her family she has to be paroled." We were reassured by another INS official, "It's no problem. You just fill out a one-page form asking for advance parole." But due to a new regulation, the form now costs $65. "Do we get the money back if she's refused parole?" I asked. "No," the official responded. "Paperwork is expensive." Within ten minutes of filling out the form and paying $65—without even an interview—my wife was denied "advance parole."

It was then that I began to shout. "What about the free trade agreement between the U.S. and Canada, and the unrestricted movement of goods and peoples across the longest, most peaceful border in the world?"

"That has nothing to do with the INS," I was told.

But the shouting helped. The officials reconsidered. One said: "We're going to make a special exception. Your wife will be allowed one visit this summer across the border, but only if we know the date of her crossing at least two weeks in advance. If any tragedy happens in your wife's family between the visit this summer and next spring when she gets her permanent residence, there's no way we'll let her leave." The official talked about "the border" between the United States and Canada with distinct awe, as though it were the DMZ between North and South Korea.

We went back home to ponder the decision. Should we risk a trip to Canada or not? My wife's parents are old. What if something did happen next winter? But the INS reached the decision for us. We soon got a letter in the mail. The INS District Commissioner, Walter D. Cadman, had apparently overruled his subordinates. Under no condition could my wife visit Canada "for the purpose of free travel." If she were "a refugee from Cuba ... who wants to apply for a United States immigrant visa in Canada," then an exception could be made. But as she was just a Canadian, that was verboten.

The INS has an explanation for this logic. There are some 40,000 applications for permanent residence pending in Maryland and only six INS examiners. This is why people have to wait a year before having their status settled. *Give us more money and we'll hire more examiners,* the INS pleads. But in the meantime, what about some flexibility? As one congressional staffer put it to me, the regulations were simply not written with year-long backlogs in mind: the INS could easily interpret the law differently if it wanted.

But my wife's case is merely part of a much larger story, as I later found out: in the midst of low federal budgets coupled with a history-making wave of immigration, the INS, far from getting a bit creative, is hunkering down and becoming increasingly nasty. America might be the country of immigration, but the INS is earning a reputation as the federal government's most unpleasant bureaucracy. Charging $65 for a one-page request that is often denied is a kind of official corruption no less repulsive than the various forms of unofficial corruption I witnessed for years in Africa and the Middle East. But because only immigrants, many of whom do not speak or write English well, have to deal with the INS bureaucratic meat grinder, the service is able to avoid public criticism and thus gets little pressure to clean up its act.

Meanwhile, we arranged for a reunion with my wife's family in northern Vermont last July. There is a lakeside resort that offers canoes, "only three miles paddling distance" from Canada. So near yet so far.

ROBERT D. KAPLAN

Robert D. Kaplan is a veteran of Third World bureaucracies.

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United States than those from friendly countries. Thus, the administration granted asylum to scores of refugees from Afghanistan during the 1980s and to refugees who escaped from Cuba in a helicopter last year, but refused thousands from El Salvador and Guatemala.

There are still further immigration restrictions. Under the law, not even an extraordinarily skilled, politically persecuted husband of an American citizen can immigrate to the United States if he is or was at any time in the previous ten years a member of the Communist Party. Under federal law, this prohibition is supposed to be illegal. In 1987 Congress passed legislation reforming the 1952 McCarren-Walter Act, which barred Communists from entering the United States. The new law prohibits the government from shunning people who hold political beliefs that, for an American citizen, would be legal. But that hasn't stopped the INS from requiring immigration applicants to "list your present and past membership, in or affiliation with every organization, association, fund, foundation, party, club, society, or similar group in the United States or any other place," including "location, dates of membership, and the nature of the organization." Write down "Communist Party" and you won't get in. The INS also maintains a "lookout list" of people from various countries who, because of their political beliefs, would be rejected out of hand if they attempted to immigrate. The list, which dates back to 1904, contains more than 350,000 names; 250,000 of them were added after 1980.

Otherwise qualified applicants are also prohibited from immigrating if they are infected with what the government terms a "highly communicable disease" and thereby pose a health risk to Americans. The administration's definition of this term, however, is strangely selective. As Donald Goldman, a member of the National Commission on AIDS, points out, "Tuberculosis isn't included on the government's list of infectious diseases. Neither is bubonic plague." In practice, the term "highly communicable disease" has become a euphemism for AIDS. The administration claims that HIV and AIDS carriers are barred because the government cannot afford health care for infected indigent immigrants. This is a specious argument. After all, the government doesn't stop terminal cancer patients at the border.

There is one way under the new immigration laws that a lucky few can circumvent all these nitpicky regulations and enter the country whether they're eligible to or not. For the first time, the INS is holding a lottery this year that will grant green cards to a total of 40,000 people. For four days last October, applicants were allowed to mail in as many entry forms as they wanted. There were only three restrictions. Applicants couldn't be Communists. They couldn't be "highly communicable." And they couldn't be from Mexico. Or the Philippines. Or China. Or from any country other than thirty-three mostly white, mostly European nations chosen to participate. It is probably no coincidence that many of the excluded countries are the same non-white nations on which the United States had severe immigration restrictions before country-by-country quotas were abolished in 1965. And it is certainly not a coincidence that fully 40 percent of the 40,000 lottery winners have to be from Ireland. Edward Kennedy, who sits on the Senate's Immigration and Refugee Affairs Subcommittee, wrote the requirement into the bill.

Immigration law is excessively complex because Congress has no incentive to make it more simple. From the standpoint of Capitol Hill, there's no percentage in immigration. The people affected by the immigration laws aren't citizens, and non-citizens don't vote. Yet it wouldn't require a midnight session of Congress to reform the laws enough so that immigrating to America would become a less harrowing experience:

Split the agency in two. Even in the face of the INS's elaborate defense machinery, the number of people attempting to sneak into the United States these days isn't dwindling. While the estimated number of illegal immigrants declined between 1986 and 1988, a December INS newsletter reports that in the past two years, the numbers have once again hit pre-1986 levels. The number of illegal aliens in this country is now about 4.5 million.

Granted, controlling the borders is an impossible task. But in its zeal to catch every illegal, the INS regards everyone on the other side with suspicion. To the service, a legal immigrant is merely an illegal alien with papers. The logical way to ease the agency's internal conflict is to form two agencies: a true Immigration and Naturalization Service, concerned with assisting eligible applicants, and an Identification and Expulsion Service to police the borders and remove illegals.

Get rid of the forms. The INS could easily get by with one or two well-designed application forms. Current forms are endlessly redundant, requiring the same information line after line. The only purpose multiple forms serve is to justify the agency's fees—which wouldn't be needed if there weren't so many forms.

Gut the immigration laws. Start by tossing out the lookout list, ending restrictions on AIDS carriers, and getting rid of all others you can't explain in one breath.

Reforming the INS not only would benefit legal immigrants, it would also bring closer to truth a chapter in American mythology. The agency that ushered millions of eager immigrants through the gates of Ellis Island and into the promised land has been transformed into an impenetrable army of cops and bureaucrats. The INS should at least try to live up to the "give us your poor" refrain.

Meanwhile, America's huddled masses can find the agency's new face reflected on TV. Recently, ABC bumped its long-running sitcom "Perfect Strangers," about a wide-eyed island immigrant who comes to America to live with his cousin. Taking over the same time slot is "Billy," a sitcom about a Scottish college professor whose visa runs out. In "Perfect Strangers," the foreign cousin finds family, adventure, and a beautiful American bride. In "Billy," the professor marries a student to avoid being deported by the INS. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Linkages

In 1977 Barbara Kopple presented *Harlan County, U.S.A.* after five years' work. Now, after seven years' work, she presents **American Dream** (Prestige). The earlier documentary, trenchant and humane, was about a coalminers' strike in "bloody Harlan." Kopple's new documentary is about a meatpackers' strike against the Hormel company in Austin, Minnesota, in the mid-1980s. It's equally trenchant and humane, but as she herself has said, the Austin strike was a different matter.

In Harlan County, the struggle was along classic nineteenth-century lines: workers against bosses, physical courage, violence, battle hymns like "Which Side Are You On?" In Austin the divisions were more intricate. The Austin local contended with the union's national office in Washington, which was more conciliatory, as well as with Hormel. The local brought in a labor consultant, the president of Corporate Campaign, Inc., to help it in its fight. This created more trouble: a group of dissenters splintered off from the local. There was no substantive violence. At times picketers had to be carried off by police (some of whom were high-school classmates), the National Guard was called in to protect strikebreakers; but it was nothing like Harlan County. And there were no battle hymns.

Nonetheless the privations of the Hormel strikers were terribly real, in money and morale. The added strife caused by the divisions in the local's ranks were painful—brother literally against brother in one case. The anger of the workers is clear (and contagious): Hormel wanted to cut wages from $10.69 an hour to $8.25, with a 30 percent cut in benefits, in a year when the company made a profit of $29 million. Hormel said it wanted "to remain competitive."

The strike ended in defeat for the workers after more than twenty-five weeks, when the Washington office accepted concessions from Hormel and cut off strike benefits to the unruly local. Hormel then paid $10.25 an hour, but only 20 percent of the strikers were reemployed: the other jobs were filled by replacement workers (scabs) who stayed on. Three years later, Hormel rented half the plant to a company that paid $6.50 an hour.

Like all good films, *American Dream* accomplishes something more than it intended. Two matters stand out. First, it makes a familiar fact more vivid. In the majority of cases, no man or woman strikes alone: his or her family is also on the picket line, so to speak, especially the children. With a weekly $40 benefit from the national headquarters, a striker's resolve tends to weaken as his or her family's deprivations increase.

Second, there's a link between this film and the campaign oratory we're hearing just now—not in content but in tone. Much of the stuff in campaign sound bites, with the candidates trying to pass off ambition as dedication, depends for its effect less on sense than on delivery—the formulaic rising pitch and climax. The speakers in *American Dream* are utterly sincere, on the platform or from the floor, which distinguishes them from most political candidates; yet they, too, often don't quite make sense. They, too, depend on pitch and vehemence.

Kopple sees the whole Austin story as part of the Reagan decade of union-busting that began with the air-traffic controllers' strike. This seems just.

Basic Instinct (Tri-Star) is about a San Francisco detective who investigates the murder of a male rock star during sex. The detective, played by Michael Douglas, follows a trail that leads to a wealthy novelist-heiress who was the star's lover and who also has a live-in lesbian lover. The heiress sets out to seduce the detective and succeeds. He also had/is having an affair with a female police psychoanalyst, about whom secrets are revealed.

When this film was being shot in San Francisco, gay and lesbian groups protested and asked for changes in the screenplay because lesbians were shown as homicidal. I pass no judgment on the sensibilities of people who have ingrained difficulties in our society, but it's hard to see how people can take the effects of this picture with any seriousness. It's just one more dunk in the slime pit of exploitation. Anyway, what sort of probity could we expect from producers who paid a reported $3 million for this screenplay?

Douglas has said, "I still haven't resolved the message of this film in my mind. I swear I haven't." I believe him. I haven't resolved it either. I also haven't resolved the mystery of Douglas's success. For me, he could have played the

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lead in *Memoirs of an Invisible Man* without special effects. However, Sharon Stone, who crackled in *Year of the Gun*, crackles on as the heiress.

Lovers (Aries) is a reworking of the *Carmen* triangle set in the 1950s. The Micaela is a servant, played by lovely Maribel Verdu, who desperately adores a soldier, played by dull Jorge Sanz—the Don José, of course. Discharged from the army and looking for a job in Madrid, he rents a room in the apartment of the Carmen—a young widow played most credibly by that enchantress Victoria Abril. The widow soon moves the youth from his room to hers. The maid realizes she is losing him and takes steps to regain his attention, but she fares ill against the bed-wise widow. All ends grimly, if not quite comprehensibly.

The direction by Vicente Aranda, though overloaded with close-ups, is smooth. But after about twenty minutes, I began to recognize bed moves I'd seen only the day before in *Basic Instinct*. Abril's widow is even more cunningly versatile than Stone's heiress; still, *déjà vu* set in because, in amour, there isn't a great deal of *vu* that isn't sooner or later *déjà*.

Insistence on explicit sex—almost to the point of soft-core porn—didn't begin with these two pictures: antecedents are too numerous to list. But these two latest made me think that this trend, now solidified, may alter the curricula of up-to-date acting schools. If young men and women are going to be adequately prepared for film careers, personal experience can't be relied on completely in sexual matters any more than in others. Technical polishing may be in order. Courses in acting schools may soon include Earlicking 101 and Advanced Orgasm (for those who have satisfactorily completed the introductory course). •

Robert Brustein on Theater

What Do Women Playwrights Want?

In a celebrated essay, Virginia Woolf speculated about an imaginary sister of Shakespeare who might have equaled or even surpassed her brother's creative genius had she not been doomed to obscurity by male assumptions about female roles. (Recently Gloria Steinem mused in a similar way about Mozart's gifted sister.) For centuries, narrow sexual conventions worked to restrict female achievement in the arts, particularly the public arts, and most particularly the theater, where only actresses were allowed to reach any eminence, just a cut above that of courtesans. Before the twentieth century, women playwrights were as scarce as women composers and conductors (or women preachers, to take Samuel Johnson's famous example), if you discount Hroswitha of Gandersheim, Aphra Behn, and a handful of even less memorable talents.

It is true that prospects for women theater artists—directors and designers included—brightened considerably between the 1920s and the 1950s, with the appearance in this country of Susan Glaspell, Sophie Treadwell, Hallie Flanagan Davis, and Lillian Hellman. But even Davis's Living Newspaper and Hellman's *Little Foxes* hardly prepared us for the spate of plays by, for, and about women that have multiplied in the last decade. The theater hasn't yet produced a female Shakespeare, or even a female O'Neill, though England's Caryl Churchill is surely as accomplished as anyone writing for the stage today. But in terms of numbers, if not in broadness of theme, American women playwrights now represent a significant movement that is surely unprecedented in history.

To that movement can now be added the authors of three items under review this week, beginning not with a play but with a dramatic disquisition recently delivered by Laurie Anderson at Harvard's Sanders Theater. Anderson is a performance artist celebrated for synthesized renditions of eerie hi-tech musical numbers. Aroused by what she perceives to be the growing suppression of the arts along with a deepening hatred of minorities in America, she has now marshaled her talents into a defense of First Amendment privileges, delivered in a free-ranging stand-up commentary, not unlike the monologues of Spalding Gray or Eric Bogosian or Jackie Mason. The piece is in development and still needs work. All of it is polemical, much of it is rhetorical and shrill, unmediated by ambiguity or complexity. An extended video section featuring Anderson's male alter-ego—a stature-altered, voice-enhanced turkey-cock, three feet tall with size one shoes—could profitably be cut (it was previously aired on PBS's *Live From Off Center*).

But Anderson's ironic shafts of satire occasionally pierce their targets with laconic accuracy. On the defunct Red Menace: "Everyone said, 'The Russians are coming, the Russians are coming'—not a single Russian ever showed up." On Bush: "He asks us to do with the economy what we did with the war—now wait a minute, does he mean destroy it?" On Reagan: "He's always happy, like he's always singing 'When You Wish Upon a Star.'" On the senses: "You can close your eyes but not your ears—that's a defect. Still, the eyes are primitive—they pan badly, no zoom, bad dollies." On sitcoms: "The American version of the Greek chorus is the laugh track." On Puritans: "They weren't allowed to punish people on Sunday, so they came to America to exercise that glorious right." On Jesse Helms: "He saw a black dick sticking out of a business suit, so he made a law.... Now that black dick has reappeared as Long Dong Silver."

Anderson finds us in a real emergency—ideas can be crushed and people silenced—that has temporarily impelled her to abandon music in order to sound alarms about the threat to free speech. Still, she has difficulty defending 2 Live Crew, even though she believes they were singled out because they were black ("a bunch of guys bragging about the size of their dicks—I mean, what else is new?"). When she parses their lyrics, she finds them vicious, even dangerous. She used to think that art couldn't hurt you. Now she's not so sure. Throughout the country, the politics of greed has escalated into the politics of violence. "We hate kids, we hate women, gay people, black people, old people.... We got caught in some dark version of 'Father Knows Best,' where Dad has forgotten how to talk."

Those are important issues that require more subtle treatment than Anderson is able to provide with her technological equipment and synthesized voices. What is significant is the way this spirited, spiked-hair, dimpled-cheek artist has been goaded into politicizing her performance art. For her, as for many others, the censorship issue "is making people ask, What does it mean to create art?"

Paula Vogel is more concerned about another contemporary scourge, namely AIDS. Her play, **The Baltimore Waltz** (Circle

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Repertory Company), was inspired by a trip the playwright failed to take with her brother, who, she learned later, was HIV positive. Vogel's surrogate heroine, Anna, undertakes that European journey—but it takes place only in her mind. Anna riffles through her Berlitz guide and practices foreign phrases, while her brother Carl displays a pink slip to the library students he teaches, having been sacked for wearing a pink triangle to class. An officious doctor diagnoses Carl's affliction in incomprehensible technical terms, but it is Anna who imagines herself contracting a fatal infirmity—ATD, or Acquired Toilet Disease. ATD, of course, is her mordant substitute for AIDS (it is contracted in dirty lavatories), and Anna's imaginary illness is inspired by the same motives as her imaginary trip abroad—to expiate the sin of omission through a process of identification.

Never actually leaving Baltimore, she travels through a variety of countries, clutching Carl and her Berlitz guide, practicing French, German, and Dutch, seeking the Third Man (Harry Lime now traffics in illegal curative drugs), encountering various species of Eurotrash, until, at the end, finding her brother dead, she dances the Baltimore Waltz with his corpse, a stuffed rabbit clenched under his arm. It is a touching rite of loving exorcism, personal yet transcendent, tenderly written by Vogel and sensitively performed by Cherry Jones (Anna), Richard Thompson (Carl), and Joe Mantello (Third Man).

Suzan-Lori Parks is a most unusual addition to the growing ranks of female playwrights, a black woman writer of avant-garde plays. As Alisa Solomon has noted, only Adrienne Kennedy has preceded her in exploring this strange terrain, though Parks is also influenced by such white experimentalists as Gertrude Stein and Richard Foreman. She represents a departure in African-American theater—a writer with more on her mind than race. Distinguishing her work from what she calls the "I'm-gonna-get-you plays of the '70s," she is as much a product of Western postmodernism as of black consciousness. "It's insulting," she said in a post-performance discussion quoted by Solomon, "when people say my plays are about what it's about to be black—as if that's all we think about, as if our life is about that. My life is not about race. It's about being alive," adding, "Why does everyone think that white artists make art and black artists make statements? Why doesn't anyone ever ask me about *form*?" This is invigorating, to say the least. But although her play, **The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World** (recently performed at Yale's Winterfest in New Haven, along with plays by two other woman writers, Maria Irene Fornes and Colette Brooks), is a weird and woolly exercise in form, it is, as the title suggests, also an essay on race.

The characters, costumed and made up as fictional types and mythical stereotypes—Bigger Thomas, Uncle Tom, Topsy (who sometimes sounds like Butterfly McQueen), Hazel the maid, a Bantu warrior—are endowed with names like Black Man with Watermelon, Black Woman with Fried Drumstick, Queen-then-Pharaoh Hatshepsut, Old Man River Jordan, and so on (suggesting that still another dramatic antecedent for the play is Jean Genet's *The Blacks*). Like other verbal adventurers, especially Joyce and Stein, Parks is preoccupied with deconstructing language: *The Death of the Last Black Man* is partly an effort to exalt black English into a kind of poetic code. It is also an effort to adapt English words to the black experience.

As the play jerks the audience through history in non-sequential nightmare fashion, a character named "Before Columbus" reflects on a time when the world was flat, while another insists that the world was "roun'" until Columbus made it "round" with a "d." Noah's African son, Ham, reconstructs

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Genesis from the black point of view ("Yes Suh Mistuh Suh breeded with hisself n gived us Wassername"), as cries of "SOLD" chronicle the marketing of slaves at auction. "Wheer he gonna go now that he done dieded?" becomes a kind of mournful refrain when Black Man undergoes a series of executions, including electrocution and lynching, watermelons accumulating at his feet.

In short, Parks deconstructs language as a means of establishing the place of blacks in recorded history. "You will write it down because if you don't write it down then we will come along and tell the future that we did not exist. You will write it down and carve it out of rock." This is another way of fulfilling Milan Kundera's definition of art as the struggle of memory against forgetting. Black Man dies over and over again, but he dies asking Black Woman to "Remember me."

The play, directed by Liz Diamond with a talented cast of actors, is too densely written for one mind to absorb at a single sitting. Parks's literary influences are not always the clearest indices in the theater, and her dialogue seemed glutted with (to my ears) uncoded dialect. The playwright avoids the conventions of black victimology, but her play remains engaged with issues of past racial oppression. Turning this familiar subject into metaphorical form is a daring and original idea. Somehow, it still seems somewhat familiar. It must be said, however, that the problems with *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World* are of a kind that inspire keen interest in Parks's future. It is refreshing indeed to come upon an African-American play that values poetry over realism, that is not located in a tenement or a backyard (Michael Vaughn Sims's abstract metallic setting is a distinct asset here). It is even more refreshing to discover another woman playwright who refuses to be submerged in feminist issues.

If one were to rephrase Freud's controversial query and ask, "What do women playwrights want?" the answer might be: freedom from the kind of ignorant assumptions that inspire such questions. Laurie Anderson's jaundiced look at censorship, Paula Vogel's remorseful essay on the loss of her brother to AIDS, Suzan-Lori Parks's experimentalist probe into black history are all efforts to throw off not just traditional male assumptions about the role of women, but separatist feminist assumptions as well. Independent, idiosyncratic, and alive, these works—whatever one's caveats or strictures—are significant for exploring issues common to us all. •

Understanding, and misunderstanding, race.

The New American Dilemma

BY ALAN WOLFE

I.

Since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the American racial landscape has changed dramatically. Some of those changes are obvious and uncontested. Even conservatives who opposed the act then support it now. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, no matter how the Scalia-and-Thomas Court interprets it, will remain on the books, and it will prevent the fraudulent methods once used to deny blacks the right to vote. The War on Poverty, for all its abuses, worked well in some areas, Head Start being everyone's favorite example. A black middle class has grown since the 1960s, and some economists believe that the black middle class is now more numerous than the black poor. Television stations that once tried to keep blacks off the air now compete to show sitcoms starring popular black entertainers. Black politicians run for every office in the land. America has pronounced itself a multicultural society, and although many do not like how the term is interpreted, no one doubts that it is true.

These are all impressive changes. Still, there is little celebration of racial progress in America. Something seems to have gone wrong in relations between blacks and whites in this country. What is it, how did it happen, and who is responsible for it? Finding answers to these questions, answers on which people of goodwill can agree, is perhaps the single most daunting challenge now confronting this society.

In *Two Nations* Andrew Hacker argues that the social and economic conditions of blacks have come to differ sharply during the past three or four decades from those of whites. Believing that nothing tells this story more convincingly than numbers, he presents statistics that demonstrate that blacks are more likely than whites to be poor, to live in neighborhoods that whites choose to avoid, to suffer numerous debilitating diseases, to live in other than two-parent families, to engage in crime, to be unemployed, to receive less and inferior education, to go to prison, to work for the public sector, to receive welfare, and to die a violent death. If three times as many blacks as whites are unemployed, or if the chance of living in poverty is three times greater if one is black than white, the case that blacks have made little progress in America seems confirmed.

When, in Benjamin Disraeli's novel *Sybil*, Stephen Morley speaks of "two nations," he describes worlds "between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones or inhabitants of different planets." So it is in America, according to Hacker, at least in this book. Blacks and whites—"separate, hostile, unequal," in the words of his subtitle—have little in common, because whites, who hold all the cards, will not allow blacks to achieve equality with them. *Two Nations* belongs to a recognizable genre: the literature of shame. Hacker aspires to stand with Gunnar Myrdal, though his more apposite companions are Jacob Riis and Michael Harrington, whose simple eloquence and moral passion helped awaken Americans to the horrors of inequality.

At the same time, however, Hacker tells another story, using exactly the same numbers, in a recent article in this magazine. In "The Myths of Racial Division" (TNR, March 23), he argues that the experiences of whites and blacks are converging in a variety of surprising ways. Both races witness more out-of-wedlock births, for example, and neither has a monopoly on criminal conduct. In what stands as a baffling rebuke to the title of his own book, Hacker even says that "if anything, there is evidence that race is becoming a *less* salient factor for growing numbers of Americans." If the reader is confused at this point, the matter becomes even murkier when Hacker, in the article, in the midst of trying to deny racial difference, also claims that because "black intellectual

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styles remain more discursive than linear," blacks do more poorly than whites on SAT tests. Race, less salient in some areas, suddenly appears more salient in others.

Can all these interpretations be true? Are blacks and whites both further apart *and* closer together? Like many liberal Americans, Hacker cannot seem to make up his mind whether race is behind everything or counts for nothing.

To illustrate why it is so difficult to talk about race, consider the way that Hacker deals with the extremely sensitive subjects of sex and marriage. According to his figures, 68.6 percent of black girls have had sexual intercourse by the age of 15, while among whites the percentage is 25.6 percent. 40.7 percent of the former become pregnant by the age of 18 compared with 20.5 percent of the latter. Not surprising, 63.7 percent of black births in 1988 were out-of-wedlock, compared with 14.9 percent of white births. On the face of it, these numbers are astonishing. Were he to pursue this line of reasoning, Hacker would shortly conclude that racial differences in promiscuity are similar to those in test performance: the product of different cultural attitudes and behaviors.

But he does not want to go in this direction, believing, evidently, that to make such a suggestion would smack of racism. (Although calling black intelligence discursive rather than linear, because it may be safer to discuss brains than bodies, strikes me as potentially racist.) So he backs off from emphasizing difference and turns instead to emphasize similarity. In 1950 the proportion of out-of-wedlock births among blacks was 9.9 times greater than among whites, whereas in 1988 the ratio had dropped to 4.3. Because "white births outside of marriage have been climbing at an even faster rate" than black ones, Hacker concludes that there is no use "lecturing only one race on its domestic duties."

There is a real point here. All American families, not just black ones, face troubles. But Hacker's comparisons suffer from a serious technical objection. Look again at the numbers. In 1950, when the ratio between the races was 9.9, 1.7 percent of all white births were out-of-wedlock compared with 16.8 percent of all black births. Progress, according to Hacker, lies in the fact that thirty-eight years later the ratio had dropped to 4.3, because in 1988 14.9 percent of all white births were out-of-wedlock compared with 63.7 percent of all blacks. Now ask this question: If the ratio were the same in 1988 as it was in 1950—that is, if we consider the null hypothesis that no improvement was found—what would be the percentage of black out-of-wedlock births? Multiply 14.9 percent by the earlier ratio of 9.9, and the answer is 147.5 percent—that is, far more than the total number of black babies born in the United States.

Hacker, in short, ignores the "ceiling effect" that occurs when two ratios interact. This does not suggest that there has been no convergence between the races. It does suggest that it is impossible to distinguish between the convergence that was achieved through behavioral differences and the convergence that is simply a reflection of one ratio reaching its absolute limit. Of course, this absolute limit is hypothetical. Still, when two-thirds of black children are born out-of-wedlock, the hypothetical begins to look real. Charles Booth, the great Victorian cartographer of poverty, said of his opponents: "In the arithmetic of woe, they can only add or multiply, they cannot subtract or divide." Hacker multiples and divides, but he rarely adds and subtracts, and so his comparisons are more a rhetorical device than a description of the real horrors taking place among some Americans, many of whom are black.

This, of course, is a rather technical objection. But the conclusions that Hacker draws from his comparisons are even more problematic. Fertility and illegitimacy would be charged subjects even if racial differences did not exist. When they do exist, public discussions of their consequences require a greater appreciation of moral complexity than Hacker shows. As he says, we should never lecture one race on its domestic duties; but we most certainly should be concerned with, and even lecture about, the sexual behavior of individuals, even if such individuals are disproportionately poor or disproportionately members of one race.

Americans have decided that the very poor ought to be given income support paid for by the taxes of everyone else. This support, commonly called welfare, in all likelihood does not cause higher rates of fertility and illegitimacy. (There is a large literature that refutes the conservative fantasy that "welfare mothers" have children to increase their income.) But because welfare exists, those whose tax money makes it possible have every right to be concerned by the statistics cited by Hacker (even if our commitment is far smaller than that of other countries). Fertility patterns that are subsidized by others will inevitably be viewed differently than fertility patterns that are not. It is racism to focus on racial difference as the cause of untoward behavior. But it is common sense to recognize that the consequences of untoward behavior can vary between races and other social groups. Hacker too often ignores the difference.

If numbers can be used to support so many different interpretations, can we learn anything from them? The answer is yes, but only when those who use them are sensitive to what numbers can tell us and what they cannot. Unlike Hacker, who uses numbers to support more than one interpretation, Christopher Jencks is reluctant to use them to support any interpretation. He believes that numbers can help resolve contentious debates over politics and morality, but only if we let the numbers speak for themselves, and not for the prejudices that we bring to them. It is as if those who really know numbers also know their limits. Jencks wants to show us that the big questions about race and poverty have complicated answers that fit neither the liberal worldview nor the conservative one. There is no reason to believe that things are getting better, and there is no reason to conclude that they are getting worse. Things happen, some good, some bad. Some policies work, some policies fail. If we want to discuss race and poverty intelligently, we have to "disaggregate."

Jencks takes on too many different questions to allow an adequate summary of his argument, but what he has to say about the ghetto poor gives the flavor of his method. First, he tries to separate

Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal
by Andrew Hacker
(Scribner's, 257 pp., $24.95)

Rethinking Social Policy: Race, Poverty, and the Underclass
by Christopher Jencks
(Harvard University Press, 280 pp., $27.95)

Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community
by Elijah Anderson
(University of Chicago Press, 316 pp., $19.95)

The New Politics of Poverty: The Nonworking Poor in America
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which kinds of problems have gotten worse, which have stopped getting worse, which have gotten better, and which have stopped getting better. Jencks then breaks the question of the ghetto poor into its components. One, obviously, is unemployment. Jencks argues that the unemployment rate tells us little, since it does not include those so discouraged that they have stopped looking for work, which by itself is a fairly good definition of the problem that we wish to measure. Instead he examines the number of black men in their early 20s who were neither working nor in school nor in the armed forces; this figure increased from 8 percent during the 1965-69 period to 26 percent in the 1980-83 period before declining to 21 percent. More young black men, in a word, are idle than ever before. Moreover, as we have seen, they are also not marrying and claiming paternity of their children.

To be sure, there are some hopeful signs: high school graduation rates have increased among blacks over the past two or three decades, while the pattern of violent crime shows too many ups and downs to reveal a consistent pattern. But the overall picture is one in which the worst poverty in America is no longer a function of getting older, or the byproduct of temporary unemployment. Jencks is forever an iconoclast; he wants to argue that the underclass is not, as popular opinion holds, growing. This makes his actual conclusion all the more convincing, for his numbers, as I read them, make the case that urban poverty among blacks *has* changed and it *is* more intractable.

Social science, of course, is not just numbers. There is also an ethnographic tradition that seeks qualitative insights to amplify the quantitative methods of the number crunchers. Elijah Anderson is a practitioner of perhaps the most illustrious of those traditions, the Chicago School of sociology, which relies on field work to understand what is taking place at the level of the streets. Anderson studied two adjacent neighborhoods in Philadelphia, one a black ghetto, the other a "mixed" area undergoing gentrification. Like Jencks, Anderson is meticulously careful in not reaching for dramatic conclusions. He lets his data speak for themselves. And his findings, like Jencks's, show that the conditions of life among the poorest black Americans have deteriorated.

No one is more aware of how the urban ghetto has changed than those who live within it. A generation ago urban black neighborhoods contained the figure of the "old head"—defined by Anderson as "a man of stable means who believed in hard work, family life, and the church." (Female old heads, grandmotherly types who "were seen as wise and mature figures in the community," were equally important.) Despite the erstwhile importance of these inhabitants, Anderson observes, "a new role model is emerging and competing with the traditional old head for the hearts and minds of young boys. He is young, often a product of the street gang, and at best indifferent to the law and traditional values."

Young black males—dressed in the "urban uniform" of jogging suits, expensive sneakers, broad caps, sunglasses, and heavy gold chains—frighten the older black residents of the ghetto, let alone middle-class blacks in the neighborhood next door, as much as they do anyone else. They like to engage in "gritting" or "bumping," walking around looking as mean as they can. They know that others are afraid of them and sometimes "play" with them. Powerless in the larger world of wealth and power, young black males rule the smaller world of street interactions and everyday encounters.

Anderson portrays these young men with unusual sympathy. They face a "cultural catch-22," he argues: to be accepted among their peers, they must adopt the street mannerisms that, to whites, label them as dangerous and threatening. And Anderson rightly points out that fear of street gangs extends to all black males, including the perfectly innocent (and, on occasion, to Anderson himself). It is to his credit that Anderson humanizes those who, for many whites, are something less than human. Still, the problem remains. Young black males with little to do but get into trouble are the main reason why, in this ghetto, "things were not always this way."

Anderson's account of what it is like to be young, black, and female is equally powerful. Sexually active by the age of 12, many girls in the Philadelphia ghetto have their first babies by the age of 15 or 16. The father wanders off with other males bragging about his sexual exploits, leaving the girl to turn to her own family and her peer group for support. The "baby club" thus becomes an element of life in the neighborhood, as girls praise each other's babies and give what support they can to each other. But there is a harsh competitive edge to these encounters. Having babies becomes the only thing of value in a girl's life, and "the young mother often feels the need to dress her baby in the latest and most expensive clothes 'that fit' (rather than a size larger that the baby can grow into)."

After a while the baby, so important to the young mother, becomes a burden, an obstacle to fun and to further sexual adventure. Mothers and sisters can tire of the work involved, creating a special role for grandmothers, some of them in their mid-30s, who "may simply adopt the baby as another one of her own." Obviously this is not the whole picture. There are stable families in even the most desperate neighborhoods, and not all fathers will reject paternity. But the overall pattern is one that seems destined to produce infants who, in fifteen years, will reproduce the despair of their own childhoods, or lack of childhoods.

No other aspect of life in the Philadelphia ghetto is more chilling than the influence of drugs, particularly crack cocaine. Crack cocaine destroys everything that makes a viable community possible. Friendship and trust are turned into instruments for hooking new addicts. Children "backstab" their parents by promising to do better, only to "mess up" as soon as they can. Crack "zombies," in Anderson's account, are more desperate and more dangerous than what used to be called "junkies." For one thing, they approach crime with "a new boldness." As Anderson writes, "They seem to lack a sense of reality and the immediate consequences of their behavior." The old heads and strong women of this community look on in shock and dismay as crack establishes a new status hierarchy in the community.

It is clear, then, that one cannot obtain an accurate picture of American race relations merely by comparing white and black, as Hacker does. For the fact is that the most fateful and interesting developments have been taking place not between the races, but within one of them. On the one hand, there was a sharp increase in the number of American blacks who entered the middle class. On the other hand, the situation of those who were already worse off has become even bleaker.

So blacks and whites are more like each other and less like each other. Middle-class blacks and whites, although often living in separate neighborhoods share roughly the same aspirations and act in roughly the same way. It ought to follow that the worst off whites and the worst off blacks are also quite similar. Hacker made this point in his article in these pages, where he argued that poor whites in rural areas experience the same rates of out-of-wedlock births familiar to blacks. But as much as one would like to reach the conclusion that poverty affects everyone in exactly the same way,

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there is an impediment: poverty among the worst-off black Americans is urban poverty, which makes it different, not only from the poverty of rural whites in Maine, but also from the historical experience of black poverty in America.

Never before have so many poor blacks lived so close together in such poverty. (William Julius Wilson calls this the "concentration effect.") Black urban poverty has created social conditions that are wildly at odds with the promise of humane and secure social order. They kill, often at a tragically early age, those who live under them. They are destructive to hard-working, law-abiding parents trying to raise children amid them. They warp the character and the altruism of middle-class people who come in contact with them. They are dangerous to those who stand in the way of the bullets that are a byproduct of them. They are corrosive of the values of those trying to escape them.

Whatever progress has been achieved for middle-class blacks, in other words, the condition of the urban black poor has deteriorated over the past quarter century, to the point where it threatens all the other gains in race relations that were realized during the same period. The kind of social science practiced by Jencks and Anderson makes it impossible to escape the conclusion that what has gone wrong in America is the emergence of a distinct urban "underclass," a term that almost no one, including Jencks and Anderson, likes but whose use has become unavoidable nonetheless.

II.

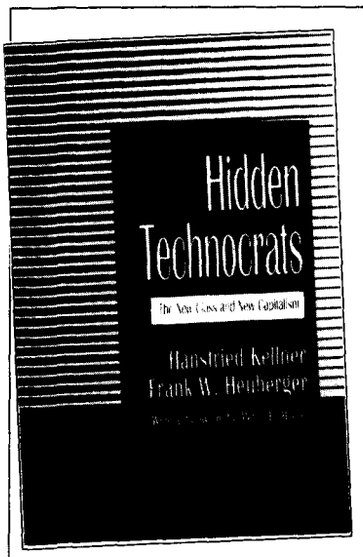
It is one thing to describe what has happened and quite another to account for why it happened. Three general explanations for the conditions of life that face the black urban poor are laced throughout the books under review. They are: white racism; the transformation of the economy; and the moral character of the poor.

That white racism is the single most important cause of black poverty is a point of view that received more or less official recognition with the report of the Kerner Commission in 1968. Depending on which version of the theory one chooses, the general line of argument runs as follows. The legal segregation that followed slavery has itself broken down, but it has been replaced by an unofficial and powerful form of racism that leads whites to take any measures necessary to preserve their sense of superiority to blacks.

At the psychological level, white fears about blacks are irrational and stereotypical reactions that seek simple answers to complex problems. At the social level, white choices about housing and schools reflect a desire to protect racial homogeneity, even when it runs counter to economic self-interest. At the political level, the 1980s and 1990s constitute a counterrevolution (Studs Terkel calls it the "Second Betrayal") in which reactionary politicians brazenly manipulate symbols like Willie Horton to mobilize the anger of white ethnics, thereby permitting them to redistribute income to the rich. Blacks, therefore, cannot be blamed for the problems they face. Any changes that must be made must be made by whites.

Of the authors under review, the two who have the least experience and competence in social scientific methods—Terkel and Hacker—are the two most attracted to the white racism explanation. Ostensibly, of course, Terkel is only interviewing others in his new book *Race*, not offering his own account. But offer it he does, as always, and on nearly every page. For one thing, his verité method is anything but random. He specializes in finding "types," colorful characters who embody Trends, Values, Positions. There is the Noble Sufferer, the black person of extraordinary dignity who, despite decades of oppression, is ready to forgive in the name of God. There is the Hard-Nosed Liberal, the tough white ethnic who ought to be racist as hell but who speaks a kind of Popular Front language blaming class rather than race. There is even a former Ku Klux Klanner turned Human Relations Council activist. These people have interesting stories to tell, but very few conclusions may confidently be drawn from them. *Race* is the kind of book for those who think that if we could all sit around the campfire, we would all become friends.

Hacker (of the book, not the article) also tends to adopt the white racism theory to account for black poverty. "From slavery through the present," he writes, "the nation has never opened its doors sufficiently to give black Americans a chance to become full citizens." Hence segregated housing is "residential apartheid" that is "imposed" on blacks in ways different from the experience of any other ethnic or racial group. American schools "focus mainly on the achievements of white people." Moreover, schools are segregated because of "the attitudes and actions of white parents, who have made it clear that they will accept integration on the most minimal of terms." Hypertension, asthma, and AIDS—all of which affect the



HIDDEN TECHNOCRATS
The New Class and New Capitalism
Hansfried Kellner and Frank W. Heuberger
With a foreword by Peter L. Berger

Since the early 1970s, critics have identified a new elite in modern society, one based on the "knowledge industry." This new class has been seen as a natural political and cultural opponent of the old business based middle class—and because it naturally has close ties to academia and the media, both critics and proponents see the New Class as positioned for great influence. *Hidden Technocrats* details contemporary characteristics of the New Class phenomenon and maps its location in contemporary America and Western Europe, identifying a new symbiosis with older bourgeois culture.

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black community disproportionately—are "not simply due to poverty," but also reflect "the anxieties that come with being black in America." "The strains that come with being black put extra burdens on a marriage," and therefore contribute to high rates of female-headed households and out-of-wedlock births. Because "it is white America that has made being black so disconsolate an estate," Hacker concludes that "the question for white Americans is essentially moral: Is it right to impose on members of another race a lesser start in life, and then to expect from them a degree of resolution that has never been demanded from your own race?"

Who can disagree with Hacker's assertion that "something called racism obviously exists"? Patrick Buchanan is only the latest in a line of politicians who instinctively understand the fears of some whites and pander to them. Ugly and demeaning episodes erupt on even the most liberal campuses (Michigan, Wesleyan) and in suburban neighborhoods proud of their tolerance (Wellesley, Massachusetts). The instinct to protect white turf in New York is as powerful as it is primitive. We are, as Terkel notes, obsessed by race, forever aware of the racial and ethnic identity of those around us. Yet the argument for white racism as the cause of what has gone wrong among the urban poor increasingly wears thin as social scientists investigate the complexity of human behavior. Two areas in particular illustrate the limits of too great a focus on white racism: crime and the resistance to affirmative action.

If there is any one reason why whites distance themselves from blacks, it is because they fear violent crime. In 1990, according to Hacker, 61.2 percent of all arrests for robbery were of blacks, as were 54.7 percent of all arrests for murder and manslaughter. This means that blacks were arrested five times more than their percentage of the population for the one crime and four-and-a-half times more for the other. Now, arrest rates are not a precise measure of crime, since not all criminals are arrested, and police forces generally show a tendency to arrest blacks more willingly than whites. Still, surveys of victims generally match the arrest ratios for the most violent crimes (except rape); 63.9 percent of those surveyed by the FBI in 1989 said that those who robbed them were black, while 53.9 percent of all murders committed in 1990 were by blacks. It is obviously a manifestation of racism for a white person to believe that every black male walking toward him is going to commit a robbery or a murder. But is it racism, given these differences in the racial composition of crime, to choose to live in a neighborhood that has a reputation for safety, even if in choosing a mostly white neighborhood one abandons the worst areas in the inner city primarily to poor blacks?

From Hacker's perspective, however, racial differences in crime are a "myth" that needs "debunking." (I am quoting now from his article.) Whites used to commit the kinds of violent crimes in which blacks are now engaged, he argues, and in predominantly white states they still do. Moreover, a division of criminal labor has emerged in which whites specialize in white-collar crime and blacks in mayhem. And since there are no "real" racial differences in crime, it is an expression of racism to focus disproportionately on black criminality. The Republicans did this, Hacker suggests in his book, when they relied on Willie Horton to help elect George Bush. But if the Willie Horton affair has become a symbol of racism, it was also, as Thomas and Mary Edsall have pointed out, a symbol of liberal blindness toward crime. Of course the Republicans were cynical in their use of the Horton issue, but this does not explain why so many white voters responded. Perhaps they sensed that those who attribute white fears of black criminals to the psychological disposition of the former and not to the actual behavior of the latter are incapable of an honest discussion of the relationship between race and crime.

Nor can resistance to affirmative action be completely attributed to white racism, if for no other reason than the appearance of doubts among blacks as well as whites. Jencks helps us understand why affirmative action is too complex a policy to be treated in simple liberal (or conservative) terms. On the one hand, affirmative action did not necessarily produce dramatic new employment possibilities for blacks. Jencks demonstrates instead that affirmative action helped to perpetuate a dual labor market among black males: those with steady jobs were helped, but a greater number of black males could not find steady jobs. At the same time, the political resistance to affirmative action among whites increased because most people knew of cases in which whites were passed over for blacks. "As a result," Jencks writes of affirmative action, "both whites and blacks now see themselves as victims of discrimination," an outcome difficult to square with the proposition that affirmative action failed because racist whites did not want blacks to find jobs.

Racial discrimination still exists in America, and it combines with poverty, unemployment, and other social ills in devastating ways. But you cannot explain a variable with a constant. If whites are racist, and have always been racist, neither the deterioration among very poor blacks nor the improvement among middle-class blacks makes sense. The white racism theory is especially ill-equipped to deal with the growth of the black middle class. Those who adhere to such a thesis generally put themselves in the position of denying that any real progress in race relations has been attained. Sometimes this denial of progress becomes absurd, as when Hacker writes that "while lynchings are no longer used as means of control, anxieties over interracial sex have far from abated." Progress in the future can only come by acknowledging progress in the past, and this the theory of white racism is incapable of doing.

III.

A second account of the causes of black poverty emphasizes the loss of jobs in the black community as a result of large-scale change in the economy. All such accounts stand in the shadow of the work of William Julius Wilson. In a series of books and articles, he has argued that while the problems facing blacks in earlier periods of American history could be primarily attributed to racism, recent economic changes put a greater weight on class than on race. In particular, urban blacks, who entered the labor market in large numbers during the go-go years of the 1960s, have begun to lose jobs because jobs have left them. We face a serious structural mismatch: jobs exist in the suburbs, or even abroad, while unskilled workers live in the city. The costs of bringing the two together are high, and urban blacks pay those costs.

Lawrence Mead has serious reservations about explanations based on changing economic structures. Out of the Great Depression emerged a political configuration in which the distribution of work became the major issue facing the country; some had more, at higher wages, and some had less, at lower wages. With the War on Poverty and subsequent developments, he argues, the distribution of work was no longer the issue it had been. Instead the issue became whether work itself would be expected. "On the whole," Mead writes, "the immigrant poor of old were poor *despite* work, while the current poor are needy for *lack* of it." Those who do not work, unlike those who work for low wages, are dependent on taxpayers. Poli-

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tics thus shifts from a struggle between capital and labor to issues involving government and taxation.

With this shift, issues of character and capacity become part of the politics of dependency. Americans, Mead believes, are wedded to what he calls the "competence assumption." If you are viewed as in charge of yourself, you will not generally need the beneficence of others. If you are incompetent through no fault of your own, you can expect others to help you. But if you are competent and unwilling to take charge of your life, no one can be expected to be your keeper. The new politics of poverty involves those who fail the competence test: they can work, they choose not to, and hence most Americans are increasingly (and in Mead's view rightly) fed up with them.

To prove his point, Mead takes every single aspect of an economic theory of poverty and attempts to refute it. Are wages too low? There are certainly jobs that pay little, but Mead asks, "Why does one *quit* work when one cannot make ends meet? It is not a reaction that struggling middle-class Americans are likely to understand." Are jobs available? "At least low-paid work is readily available to many, perhaps most, of the poor." Does discrimination bar access to employment? "It is difficult to believe that many competent black workers are being denied opportunity." Is childbirth an obstacle to employment? A hodge-podge child-care system "seems generally adequate for purposes of employment," and "the difficulties that children pose for working mothers appear to be far more manageable than is often supposed."

But Mead's case against the intuitively obvious argument that jobs have left the inner cities doesn't marshal sufficiently convincing data. He argues that proponents of the mismatch theory "have failed to demonstrate a causal connection between economic restructuring and non-work." This is a peculiar point; not only is causal determination impossible with statistics, but the burden is on Mead to undermine the theory, not on its proponents to nail its truth down beyond the possibility of attack. Then Mead resorts to qualifiers. "The fall in employment *might* result from the population abandoning older cities, especially ghetto areas, rather than factories abandoning workers." It might, and it might not; and it is not even clear that it matters. Next Mead says that the mismatch theory "may explain *part* of the inner-city non-work problem," but only in places like Chicago, Newark, Philadelphia, Detroit, New York, and Cleveland—places that, somewhat oddly, he argues "do not typify American cities," as if Phoenix or Seattle does. Mead's ultimate sentence on this topic says little or nothing: "Inability to reach jobs, therefore, *appears* to play only an incidental role in the problem of nonworking poverty considered nationally." And the same problems exist with the rest of Mead's arguments. Can poor mothers find affordable child-care so that they can work? The overwhelming answer from nearly every quarter is that they cannot. Mead argues that they can, or so he seems to argue. Actually he concludes that the difficulties are less than usually proclaimed, but that they can be quite insurmountable in a practical sense.

Mead's book is unfortunately similar to Hacker's. Both blame only one thing for black poverty: white hostility in the one case and an unwillingness to accept jobs in the other. Moreover, both conflate the difference between the urban black poor and the urban black working class. Jobs are available for the one, although recent cutbacks in government are making them less available. (Mead pays insufficient attention to the fact that blacks, far more than whites, work in the public sector.) But for the other, a life of crime or trade in drugs is so much more "rational" an option that even a rapid infusion of low-paying jobs would make little difference. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Mead is so focused on numbers that he fails to understand the actual, everyday conditions of life among the urban poor. He should have learned something from Jencks. "All ... ideologies lead to bad social policy," Jencks writes in the introduction to his book, concluding that "the ongoing quest for internal consistency that I see as the hallmark of any successful ideology makes realism extremely difficult." Jencks's warning applies to academic theory as well as ideology; in both cases, driving home one's points in a relentless and consistent manner often makes a problem clearer, but at the risk of losing touch with the real world.

IV.

It is important for Mead to demonstrate that all people are potentially competent, for his aim is to reintroduce questions of character and moral behavior, which belong to the third of the explanations for black urban poverty. Our political tradition, rooted in a moral axiom about self-reliance, is becoming obsolete, according to Mead, because there are ever larger numbers of people who are not self-reliant. That is why "we need a new political language in which competence is the subject instead of the assumption. We need to know how and why the poor are deserving, or not, and what suasions might influence them."

But Mead's new language is remarkably like our—and England's—old language. Most nineteenth-century discussions of poverty were in fact discussions of morality. Mead is quite incorrect to stress that what is at stake in contemporary debates on poverty is "the end of the Western tradition" and the need for "a new political theory." In current debates around poverty and moral character, we find ourselves right in the heart of the Western tradition.

Still, if we look beyond Mead's occasionally apocalyptic remarks, he is quite right to argue for the importance of morality and character in politics. For all liberal societies are premised on a contractual understanding of the social order, which requires that the parties to the contract be understood as rational, in control of their passions, and responsible for the consequences of what they do. These are often stern requirements. To adhere to them, we expect people to rise above external temptation and internal weakness of will. Is it fair to have such expectations of the very poor, whose conditions of life seem so far removed from the traditions of Protestant rectitude out of which contractual liberalism grew?

James Q. Wilson, whose Catholic upbringing in Southern California was far removed from John Locke's England, believes that it is. His new book brings together essays that Wilson has published over the years, the earliest from 1967, the latest from 1991. They are devoted to the theme that "a modest American concern for good manners and personal decency seems the height of democratic sensibility." Wilson attributes many of the problems facing American society to "the working out of the logical consequences of the Enlightenment." He argues that, especially in the universities and among leftish intellectuals, what had once been a liberal doctrine emphasizing self-control was turned into a doctrine emphasizing self-expression.

There were once sources of resistance to the emergence of cultural patterns emphasizing unrestrained freedom, especially in ethnic communities and in the Long Beach of Wilson's youth. There still are parents who know the right way to punish children. Some schools still teach values. But overall, according to Wilson, far too many Americans now lack character. And nowhere is this lack more seriously felt than among

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the urban black poor:

> The folk culture of urban blacks ... was and is aggressive, individualistic, and admiring of semi-ritualistic insults, sly tricksters, and masculine display. This popular culture may have been a reaction against the repressive and emasculating aspects of slavery; whatever its origin, it was not a culture productive of a moral capital off which people could live when facing either adversity or affluence.

One ought to be careful with words, and in the statement just quoted Wilson isn't careful. After both Anderson and Jencks, there is no gainsaying the individualistic and even aggressive nature of the black ghetto; but Wilson appears to be saying something else. For one thing, he is talking of a "folk culture," by which, presumably, he means a set of traditions. Yet the urban ghetto is a relatively new phenomenon in American life. Historians like Herbert Gutman have shown conclusively that in the past American blacks came from stable families and strong communities. Moreover, there is very little link between slavery and the urban underclass; migrants from the South to the North, whose experience is closest to slavery, tend to do better in the dynamics of the labor market than blacks born in the ghetto. Wilson's last comment, moreover, suggests that blacks have trouble with affluence, which the emergence of a black middle class thoroughly disproves.

Wilson, in short, is right to be concerned with character, but one awaits a more scrupulous treatment of the subject than one finds in these essays. The great danger with characterological explanations of urban poverty is the question of whose character is the standard. There are answers to this question: no matter how particularistic an ethnic or racial group may be, there remain universalistic attributes of character that must be cultivated if we are all to live together in a single society. They include respect for others, a willingness to obey the law, and a sense of personal responsibility. (If these are bourgeois virtues, so be it.) But Wilson goes further. He wants the police "to have the tools to remove undesirable persons from a neighborhood," as if undesirability were a clear and permanent trait. It can be, but drunkenness or vagrancy can also be the temporary state of people whose character is otherwise flawless. It is as if Wilson wants the peculiarities of his Southern California upbringing to constitute the universal standard for all.

Whenever the word "character" is linked to the word "poverty," a rhetorical war breaks out. The delicate issue of whether unequal people can be expected to behave in equal ways is broached. Social scientists like Herbert Gans and Michael Katz are on constant watch for any sign that we might even dare use moral language in discussing poverty. In more recent years, this debate has focused on the term "underclass." Gans proposes that it be banished from the vocabulary of social science. (It has already disappeared from the vocabulary of most of the left.) It is, he writes, "a value-laden, increasingly pejorative term that seems to be becoming the newest buzzword for the *undeserving* poor."

As is often the case with debates of this sort, the real issue is not whether we talk about the "underclass" or "the undeserving poor," but how we do so. Gans and Katz do not sufficiently appreciate the struggles of the very poor who *do* have character. We ought to congratulate those who overcome extreme poverty rather than develop a language that cannot acknowledge their achievements. Moreover, such an extreme relativism of values, by celebrating "alternative" lifestyles that are in fact symptoms of desperation, risks consigning to perpetual poverty those whom it seeks to help. But what is really at issue in the debate over the underclass is whether some of us have a right to pass moral judgment on others. And the answer must be that, so long as we live by a sense of contractual obligations, we have such a right. For no contract has only one party. The denial of the importance of morality and character, in not permitting us to make judgments about others, denies also our ability to make judgments about ourselves.

If the real question is not whether we make judgments about others but how, Wilson also leads us in the wrong direction. The problem with Wilson's virtues is not that they are bourgeois, but that they are too unforgiving. "Like multiplication and grammar," he writes, "morality is largely learned by rote." Obedience, for sure, is learned by rote; but it is by no means clear that so is morality. Strongly influenced by behavioralism, Wilson's psychology fails to grasp a veritable revolution in that discipline's understanding of the construction of the moral self: increasingly we are learning that an individual's moral character is formed by culture. Social contracts are not enforced by laws or economic incentives. People adhere to such contracts when they feel that behind them lies a society with a sense of who its members are and why their fates are linked.

Neither side in the debate over the underclass satisfactorily addresses the larger cultural question. Those who occupy the "hard" position of insisting on obligation rightly appreciate morality, but they wrongly insist on obedience. Those on the "soft" side understand the potentially pernicious quality of authority, but they are antagonistic to morality. We ought to carry forward the nineteenth-century concern with the deserving and undeserving poor, but we also ought to refine what it means to deserve. Because we share society with them, the extreme urban poor deserve our attention and care. But because they share society with us, we deserve respect for life, law, and the rewards of individual achievement. "The only viable solution," Jencks writes, "is to ask more of both the poor and the larger society."

V.

Is there a credible story about race and poverty that most Americans can believe? It would be foolish to be optimistic when so many of the statistics and the ethnographic accounts are pessimistic. Still, good social science, by shifting the national debate from race to class, can have a salutary influence. In their own way, these books, or most of them, can be read as an effort to move the country toward a new consensus.

On the liberal side, a willingness to rethink some of the assumptions of the civil rights agenda of the 1960s can be detected in the work of Anderson and Jencks. Both have a finely developed capacity for the art and the science of sociological realism: the currently unfashionable desire to capture reality as it is. On the left, certainly, realism has been in short supply in recent times, as the instinctual response of the left to any serious social problem among the downtrodden is to deny its existence. Because his ethnography is both unsparing in its accuracy and sympathetic to its subjects, Anderson is able to transcend the customary pieties. And Jencks, whose realism lies in the way that he brings numbers to life, self-consciously seeks an agenda combining "cultural conservatism, economic egalitarianism, and incremental reform." (My only complaint with his book is that he calls this combination "unusual," but its terms were formulated years ago by Daniel Bell and carried forward to the discussion at hand by William Julius Wilson.)

Sometimes lost in the debate over race (and the very poor) is that the right has shifted ground as well. James Q. Wilson includes a 1990 lecture that modifies his argument, developed five years earlier with Richard J. Hernnstein, that genetic and biomedical factors cause crime. Now Wilson insists that, contrary to the way his earlier book was inter-

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preted, "biology is not predestination." Similarly, Mead's *The New Politics of Poverty* is a more subtle and nuanced account than his previous *Beyond Obligation*. In his new book, he concludes that "it is really the Republicans' destiny to deal with race, as it is the Democrats' to deal with class," which means that any conservative effort to define community "must deal with race, as the meaning of the American polity has revolved around that question since the nation's beginning." Conservatives tend to avoid hard questions by invoking the market as their solution. Mead is far too sophisticated a political theorist to engage in such escapism.

It would be Panglossian to conclude from these shifts that a solution to the problems associated with the urban black poor is at hand. But two older stories about race and poverty are beginning to lose credibility in this country. One of those stories blames whites, the other blames blacks. In the former, racism constitutes so considerable a barrier to black advancement that we must take account of race in all our public activities, from jobs to reading lists. Most Americans, including an ever larger number of black Americans, find this story paternalistic and patronizing, even when it is offered with good intentions. But this does not mean that people are turning to the other story, the one that lies just beneath the surface of Ronald Reagan's popularity and George Bush's many vetoes. For it is increasingly obvious that urban blacks were the first to experience the joblessness, and the consequent loss of moorings, that many white Americans are now feeling in these recessionary times. Benign neglect may soon go the way of affirmative action.

If some blacks are better off than ever before, while other blacks are worse off than they have been in some time, some combination of the structural account and the moral account will replace an emphasis on white racism as the explanation for what is taking place in the inner city. And when it does, the outline of a new policy that would combine an insistence on behavioral change with the political leadership and the financial means necessary to challenge white resistance (and create jobs) can emerge. This policy would demand of the left that it take seriously white fears, while demanding of the right that it take seriously black despair. And, most important, it would give a positive answer to the question of whether we can hold everyone to the same standard when not everyone is equal. The only way to achieve equality in the future is to begin to act under its imperatives in the present. As unfair as it may be in the short run to expect a minority to conform to the standards of the majority—or to apply race neutral laws and economic practices when race, in this country, is anything but neutral—we have, for the sake of everyone, no other choice. •

The Human Voice

By Wilfrid Mellers

"Echo and Source": Selected Correspondence 1915-1963 by Francis Poulenc translated and edited by Sidney Buckland

(Gollancz, 448 pp., £30)

The conventional view of Francis Poulenc used to be that he was froth in the wake of World War I, a witty boy-hedonist who, in the giddy '20s, tweaked the noses of moribund establishmentarians. But since he has proved unexpectedly durable—more so than any of his colleagues among the group of young composers who claimed to be called Les Six—we have had to eat our words. Even Poulenc's adolescent works no longer seem what they used to seem. The publication of this collection of Poulenc's letters (translated and expanded from Hélène de Wendel's volume of 1967) helps us to understand at a deep level, as well as a superficially entertaining one, who the man, and therefore what the music, essentially was.

Born in 1899 into an affluent family of pharmaceutical manufacturers, and comprehensively educated at the Lycée Condoret, Poulenc enjoyed a plenitude of silver spoons. Books, visual arts, and music abounded in his home; his mother was a talented pianist, his uncle Papoum was a habitué of the French theater and café-concert. In his early teens Francis was "taken up" by the Spanish-

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Parisian pianist Ricardo Viñes, to whom the music of the time owed so much. It was to Viñes that the 17-year-old Poulenc complained about his contemptuous rejection by the director of the Paris Conservatoire. ("Your music stinks, it is nothing but a load of balls. Are you trying to make a fool of me? Ah, I see you have joined the gang of Stravinsky, Satie & Co. Well then, I'll say goodbye.")

With Viñes's help, Poulenc had no need of the establishment. He entered the corridors of fashion and, in 1917, scored a succès de scandale with his *Rhapsodie Nègre* for voice and seven instruments. In the next year this was bolstered by the aphoristic song-cycle of *Le Bestiaire,* to words by Apollinaire, and by the *Mouvements perpétuels* for piano, still Poulenc's most frequently performed work. The seal was set on this early celebrity and notoriety in 1921, when Diaghilev commissioned from Poulenc a ballet, for which the enchanting Marie Laurencin provided decor and costumes. Eventually titled *Les Biches,* and first produced in 1924, this ballet established Poulenc in the anti-establishment of Paris's theatrical avant-garde. Its wit remains undimmed, its springlike fragrance unsullied.

Looking back, we can appreciate why these adolescent pieces had tougher survival value than the run of post-war frivolities: they are the only works to display in depth the strictly musical influence of Erik Satie, whom the young Poulenc met in 1917, shortly after the scandalous premiere of *Parade,* Satie's ballet for Diaghilev, which became a rallying cry of the avant-garde. What Poulenc shares with Satie, whom he adopted as a father figure, is a singular purity of heart—and of line, harmony, and rhythm. The wide-eyed, open-eared diatonic tunes—like children's runes that sometimes exhale a whiff of the street, music hall, and circus—float in gently rotating ostinati that, going nowhere, efface temporality. Despite Satie's verbal facetiousness, his music is chaste, sad, sometimes solemn; even his occasional tonal and metrical startlements have a loony, Alice in Wonderland logic.

Poulenc's first pieces echo this lonesome integrity. He insisted that the tiny songs of *Le Bestiaire* should be sung with grave precision, mirroring what Laurencin—in an appreciative letter of September 1921—called "the nostalgia and singsong quality of these admirable quatrains.... You would think you were hearing the voice of Guillaume Apollinaire himself reciting these very lines." Identity with a French poet and with a human voice was Poulenc's primary impetus to creation. And the childish and surreal inconsequence of these minisongs finds an instrumental complement in, for instance, the way in which the hypnotic note patterns of the *Mouvements perpétuels* may float into an irresolute coda, fading on a higher chromatic discord or a "blue" flat seventh—an intimate whisper, suspended in time and space. Thus disembodied, the music's tranquillity, even its merriment, sound solitary and incipiently sad. Probity of spirit makes for technical self-sufficiency.

Poulenc's partiality for wind instruments in his adolescence reflected the aesthetic promulgated by his friend Jean Cocteau, whose 1918 pamphlet *Le Coq et l'Harlequin* deflated romantic, especially Wagnerian, pretension and became a testament of the postwar generation. But although Poulenc described his wind pieces as "rather amusing," they weren't merely that, since they preserved the childlike probity he had learned from Satie. At the same time, the young Poulenc intuitively recognized that Satie, an ultimate loner, was a tricky artist to emulate. And so he became fascinated by the more overt manifestations of avant-gardism in the work of Stravinsky, the dominating figure on the Parisian scene.

In his Russian-affiliated works involving wind instruments, Stravinsky had himself discovered links between the world of the peasant and the world of the child, but he exploited contrasts of mood and manner ironically, as Satie never did. For a while Poulenc, like Milhaud, toyed satirically, even parodistically, with Stravinskian polyrhythm and polytonality, though on the evidence of works such as the piano *Promenades* (1921) this sort of experimentation went against the grain. In a general sense, however, the succession from Satie to Stravinsky made sense, for with Stravinsky—as Poulenc put it in a letter to Paul Collaer in 1921—"craftsmanship is simply a way of refining, whereas with our old stuffed-shirts, it is a way of making something grand out of nothing."

In the 1920s Stravinsky embarked on his neoclassical phase, with pieces like the Italianate *Pulcinello,* the French-Classical *Apollon Musagètes,* and the Franco-Russian *Le Baiser de la Fée.* All these works were ballets that, wearing the masks of disparate cultures and other musics, created from postwar chaos timeless worlds of agility and grace. Henceforth Poulenc never doubted that it was this aspect of Stravinsky's music that fired him, though he legitimately believed that anything he borrowed from the greater master he made his own. Stravinsky concurred, remarking in a letter of thanks for an Easter present of Poulenc's music that "you are truly *good,* and that is what I find again and again in your music."

Yet Stravinsky was a twice-deracinated European and essentially an internationalist, while Poulenc remained unequivocally (though not parochially) French. During his productive middle years in the '30s and '40s, he divided his time between his Paris apartment and his elegant and spacious country house, Le Grand Coteau at Noizay in Touraine, where he enjoyed playing the local squire but resisted the efforts of the villagers to elect him mayor. His ideal life was "*une solitude coupée de visites d'amis,*" and his circle of "*amis*" was unusually eclectic. On anti-aircraft service in 1940, he writes to Pierre Bernac, his partner in song and the most intimate friend of his life, of his happiness in consorting with the soldiers and their girls. ("Philemon is a former lion-tamer who married his Baucis years ago in Turin, where she charmed snakes.") At the other end of the social scale he writes, in July 1944, to the Comtesse Jean de Polignac about an

> album of photos of Paris which charms and lulls me like a shot of morphine.... What an endless stream of memories come crowding in: the fragrance of the magnolias in the hallway; your perfume in the first floor corridor; the scent of thyme at the turning to your mother's door; and of greengages and peaches in my own.

Such Proustian introspection reminds us that the roguish Poulenc was in a sense a traditionalist, even a conservative. During the '30s his boyhood poets—Apollinaire, Cocteau, Max Jacob—were partly superseded, though not completely ousted, by others such as the exquisitely feminine Louise de Valmorin, and above all by Paul Eluard (who dedicated his *Le Phénix* "*à Francis Poulenc, écho et source*"). At first Poulenc's conservatism assumed milder forms. Admitting that "I am not the kind of musician who makes harmonic innovations, like Igor, Ravel, or Debussy," he claimed that "there is a place for *new* music that is content with using other people's chords," and that "the personality of my harmonic style will in time become evident." So it did, as Poulenc's Stravinsky-inspired muse increasingly embraced conservative French traditions, from the gentle hedonism of Bizet and Gounod (for whose *La Colombe* he provided recitatives) to more substantial relationships with Saint-Saëns, academician and *petit seigneur,* and with Fauré, a conservatory teacher whose reverence for Bach's linear and spiritual *gravitas* flowered in the elegance of Parisian salons. Most of all,

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Poulenc found an alter ego in Chabrier, *homme moyen sensuel*, art collector, and vivaciously original amateur composer who, despite flirtings with Wagnerism, relished the gestures of opéra bouffe and café-concert.

From these sources Poulenc evolved an idiom that, if conservative, is sui generis. Few composers are so immediately recognizable. The music veers between animal hedonism and humane sensuality, between eupepticism and dolor, between pathos and (in the strict sense) vulgarity. And as with all true hedonists, *les plaisirs de Poulenc* are shadowed with impermanence. A haunting tune may suffer a disturbing modal alteration; an infectious rhythm may haltingly skip or limpingly add a beat or a half-beat; the "*clair*" harmonies may be clouded in chromatics and enharmonies, the textures wistfully effaced in Poulenc's favorite "*halo de pédales.*"

Even in his unassuming *musique de société*, Poulenc may hint at strange vistas, as the unknown encroaches on the common ground. Consider his largest piano work, *Les Soirées de Nazelles* (1930). It has patent social connotations in that its "variations" are said to have been improvised at social junketings as portraits of, or tributes to, friends and acquaintances, perhaps in conscious emulation of Couperin's aristocratic portraits for harpsichord; and yet, even though the music is for the most part graciously social, it did not deserve the opprobrium with which its composer later dismissed it. Listening attentively to the sequence of variation 6 (*le contentement de soi*) and variation 7 (*le goût du malheur*), one realizes how responsive Poulenc is to the human contrarieties beneath the social facade. A jolly café tune and a meandering melody *effleurée* in a spider's web of sensuous dissonance prove to be variations on the same human condition.

Poulenc's favorites among his piano works—the *Improvisations* that are in fact classically rigorous in form—juxtapose Schumannesque childhood reverie with irreverent fairground music as well as with homages to the waltzing Schubert and Edith Piaf, to whom a sultry ballad in C minor is dedicated. During the war years, a decade later, Poulenc complained that the obliteration of the suburban past reinvoked in a work such as the delightful *Huit Nocturnes*—"the accordion bands, the open dance halls, Bébert in his cap and Nini in her pink silk blouse"—was a sad impoverishment. Poulenc's time-traveling is not iconoclastic, like Stravinsky's. It rather affirms that the totality of French civilization is still, for all the blows that it has suffered, alive and well in his own musical metamorphoses. Simultaneously present in his art may be up-to-the-minute modernities, the cozy conformities of yesteryear, and the panoply of French civilization from the Middle Ages, through the Renaissance, to the splendors of the Roi Soleil. The Nocturnes, for instance, include a bell piece, *Les Cloches de Malines*, that explores, in tingling Stravinskian sonorities, the "antique" modal manner of a work like Poulenc's own *Suite Française* (1935), a suite for piano or small orchestra that cunningly rehashes dances of the sixteenth-century composer Claude Gervaise.

Nor were such telescopings of past and present new in Poulenc's music. They were often latent, and sometimes patent, in the seminal works of the '20s, especially in *Les Biches* and the *Concert champêtre* for harpsichord and orchestra, commissioned in 1928 by the formidable Wanda Landowska. In that piece the *champêtre* element is not so much bucolic as suburban: alongside conscious archaisms inspired by French harpsichord music, there are evocations of the Bois de Vincennes and of Saint-Leu, lost Edens where Couperin le Grand had a townhouse, where Rousseau and Diderot were wont to stroll, and where Landowska herself had a *pied à terre*. Beyond that, the military motives that pervade the piece are apparently boyhood recollections of soldiers from a local barracks, drilling and bugle blowing in the leafy squares. In Poulenc's music, in sum, reality, memory, and dream are indivisible.

Despite the significance of dance in Poulenc's work, he never doubted that "essentially I am a man of song in all its forms." He had scant confidence in his ability to handle symphonic forms, but in the basic song form of the *mélodie* with piano accompaniment he was "afraid of no one"; and few would now deny that some of the songs of the late '30s and early '40s are, despite the restrictions of their genre, great music. The Eluard cycle of 1937, *Tel jour, telle nuit*, is wondrously varied in its emotional range, while piercing to the heart's core through a structure at once strong and economical; and war songs like *Cé* and *Montparnasse* imbue nostalgia with tragic intensity.

Seldom has an idiom deriving from the salon, and even from the café-concert, attained such depth and such force. That is because the public and the private are here fused; for if the Second World War impinged violently on the destiny of France, Poulenc himself suffered a comparable crisis. A Roman Catholic by upbringing, he had understandably "lapsed" during and after the

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first war. In 1936, however, he lost a friend (possibly a lover) in a horrendous car crash; made a penitential pilgrimage to the Black Virgin of Rocodamour; experienced what he believed to be a mystical vision; and composed the *Quatre Motets de Pénitence*. The first of his liturgical works, it remains perhaps the most deeply disturbing.

There is a telling symmetry in the fact that the enfant terrible who started out in the aftermath of the First World War should have rediscovered his faith and found a religious dimension to his art as the storm clouds gathered before the Second World War. Whether or not the penitential motets were triggered by Poulenc's "vision," there is point in the fact that Rocodamour is situated in the Poulenc family's native country between the Auvergne and the Mediterranean basin; and there may be a technical miracle, if not a mystical one, in the fact that Poulenc fashioned, from the premises of French Renaissance polyphony and homophony, music that is "modern" in being totally precarious while preserving the purity of heart typical alike of the old French chanson or motet and of Poulenc's earliest mentor Satie, the maker of "*messes des pauvres*."

During the next decade Poulenc composed other liturgical works, including some radiant *Motets de la Nativité* to balance his penitential pieces. But his longest and greatest choral work is not liturgical, though it could and should be called religious. *Figure Humaine* is in several ways a climax to Poulenc's oeuvre. He had first met Eluard in the same year, 1917, as he had encountered Satie. Satie died in 1925; but Eluard lived to become the great poet of the French Resistance, gestating the verses for this cantata during the dark years of the German occupation. Poulenc made his setting in six weeks during the summer of 1943. The score was printed secretly, as had been Eluard's poems, of which the final *Litanie* became a clarion call to the Resistance. The sung cantata wasn't performed until 1945, in London by the BBC Singers, who proved equal to its intonational problems. The technique, again rooted in French Renaissance church music, is texturally dense and closely wrought; even more than the *Motets de Pénitence*, the music springs from tension between the social and moral agony of the war and a faith that Poulenc hopefully compared to "that of a country priest."

From this marriage between the love of God and the love of *la belle France* was born the relatively large-scale works of Poulenc's last decade: the *Stabat Mater* and the *Gloria* for soli, chorus, and orchestra; the last, austere liturgical product of the composer's final year, the *Répons des ténèbres*; and above all the opera *Dialogues des Carmélites*. This, being based on Bernanos's tale of the sacrifice of nuns during the violence of the French Revolution, directly confronted the conflicts between ethical, political, and religious forces that afflicted France.

Poulenc worked on it between 1953 and 1957, remarking that he was "obnubilated [lovely word] by my Carmelites.... My familiarity with vocal music on the one hand, and the mystical ambience on the other, have enabled me to find the right tone.... Obviously people won't find it exactly amusing, but I think and hope they will be deeply moved." His hopes were justified. Despite the hermetically religious subject and an almost exclusively female cast, the success of the piece exceeded the expectations of its commissioners at La Scala, and it triumphed throughout Europe. "Very brilliant Carmelite winter," wrote Poulenc to Bernac in 1959; "Vienna, Naples, Palermo, Barcelona, Geneva, Ghent, perhaps Genoa. Eleven performances this winter, fourteen planned for 1960."

The composition of his opera caused Poulenc much anguish, and like the *Motets de Pénitence* twenty years earlier it was entangled with a personal crisis: the end of a lacerating love affair with a young man called Lucien who, after a distressing illness, "breathed his last" at the very moment when Poulenc finished his score. "Who will ever know," he asked of Simone Girard, "all that lies in the secret heart of certain works?" The public and the private were always coexistent in this double man, who was, as he put it, "as pied as a horse." He saw no opposition between his holy works and his unholy works. In the '30s he had maintained that the collocation of the *Motets de Pénitence* with the unabashedly "low" *Bal Masqué* summed up his nature, and that the one was no less representative than the other. Similarly, he considered his ribald opéra bouffe *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*—for the libretto of which he returned to his early love, Apollinaire—to be one of his best, as well as most characteristic, works, it being a complement, rather than a polar opposite, to *Dialogues des Carmélites*. The categories

Last Words

"Enough." "No, more." "Not me," he said, closing the door,
Walking away from the blaze in the bedroom behind him.
"I'm going straight." He could barely see. The sun was blinding.
Yet he knew they would come for him—it was only a matter
Of time. "Mama," he called, though the personage thus named
Was dead, and had been dead for decades, an ocean away,
In another city, another land. A stenographer was on hand
To record his last words. "I don't need a priest," he said.
Then the lights went out. It was the old familiar thrill
Of homesickness all over again. The slow earth churned on
And the money—the money was gone. Gone like *that* (he snapped
His fingers). Gone forever. And so, after the longest delay
In the history of the Trans-Siberian Express, the landscape
Began to rumble forward, just as the old fool said it would.
Europe was still the biggest bloody thing in North America.
There were no more plans. They had all turned into hospitals.
And there was nothing left to eat or smoke. A dream of tomorrow,
A prayer to an absent deity, what difference did it make?
He couldn't remember how he got here or who he was,
Only that he was still alive—that was the miraculous part,
And nothing she did would change his mind. She licked her lips.
"More," he said, liking the sound. "More, more, more!"

DAVID LEHMAN

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overlap. One might even say that the uncompromisingly tragic *Figure Humaine* could not have attained the incandescent blaze of its final chord on the world "liberté," but for the earthy vigor of the "vulgar" Poulenc.

Certainly it is not fortuitous that the public tragedy of the Carmelites should not only embrace a personal crisis, but that it should be counterpoi[illegible]ed by Poulenc's last opera, *La Voix Humaine*, for which, as for *Les Mamelles*, he returned to another poet of his youth, this time to Cocteau. The play, for a single woman character conversing on the telephone with a lover who has betrayed her, had already achieved considerable fame. When Poulenc decided to set it to music for Denise Duval, his favorite singing actress, he confessed that he found a parallel between the woman's situation and his own in the affair of Lucien.

Whereas *Dialogues des Carmélites* absolved personal distress in history and myth, *La Voix Humaine* works in terms realistic and contemporary, exploiting techniques, high and low, pertinent to the French theater, and responsive to the minutest inflections of the French language. In relation to Poulenc's own love-betrayal, this unambiguously secular work becomes hardly less powerfully purgatorial than *Les Carmélites*. In a letter to Louis Aragon in February 1959, Poulenc suggests that he "needed the spiritual and metaphysical anguish of the Carmelites to avoid betraying the terribly human anguish of Cocteau's superb text.... His short phrases are so logical, so human, so charged with implications, that I have had to write a rigorously organized score, full of suspense." To Duval he admits, in December 1959, to being "quite overwhelmed" by the recording of the work: "not tearfully, but joyfully. Having brought this beautiful, sad child into the world, all that we went through for it seems worthwhile. I am now convinced that it is a masterpiece."

Poulenc noticed the irony in the fact that it was these two highly personal theater pieces—*Dialogues des Carmélites* and *La Voix Humaine*—that established his international reputation, especially in the United States, where he was royally feted. Yet it is interesting that in 1959 he suggested to Bernac that, despite his world renown, "it would be dangerous if I did not try to become the Poulenc of '37 again. I do not mean of *Les Mamelles* but of the *Concerto* for organ." This work, scored for solo organ, strings, and timpani, is arguably the finest of Poulenc's purely instrumental pieces, probably due to its Janus-nature as a secular concerto that is religious not only because it was meant to be played in churches, but also because it was a product of the experience that had made the *Motets de Pénitence*. Its manner owes much to Bach and to French baroque organ composers, and the neoclassical Stravinsky is again the catalyst between the quasi-baroque (occasionally quasi-medieval) passages and the quick music in slightly frenetic dance rhythms.

War, not merely in a military sense, is in the offing; and the music proves, though graciously civilized, rather grandly redemptive. Writing of the piece to the Comtesse Jean de Polignac in 1936, Poulenc comments that "at Noizay I have grown into a stoutish monk, somewhat dissolute, attended by a new and excellent cook." Such ambivalence must surely bear on the lasting appeal of Poulenc's music. He had the basic human qualities—and weaknesses; and these letters reveal that what is true of the music applies also to the man. The love and the respect accorded to Poulenc would seem to have sprung from his all-too-human duality.

Some correspondents were grateful for his wisdom (for instance the singer Simone Peignot, to whom he wrote a wonderful letter of advice about her career). Many testify to his warmth and vivacity. And everybody relished his high intelligence and his generosity of spirit—which extended to composers, such as Berg, Webern, Boulez, and Messiaen, who were hardly on his wavelength. Sexually, too, Poulenc was ambivalent. Although basically homosexual, there was no sexual content in the most significant relationship of his life, the one with Bernac, who was at once a revered professional colleague and a valued arbiter in matters moral, aesthetic, and even spiritual. Moreover, Poulenc fathered a daughter by a woman improbably called Freddie.

A double man is likely to be emotionally volatile. When Poulenc was high, he was very, very high, confident that he had just produced a masterpiece. When he was low he was horrid, and his moments of near-suicidal despair ("full of moss and melancholy") were occasioned as much by sudden failures of confidence in his creativity as by his tempestuous love affairs with Raymond (his chauffeur), the beautiful but ailing Lucien, or the spate of usually low-class youths who fleetingly tickled his fancy. Still, everyone forgave him his peccadilloes; and nobody, surely, could challenge his modest assertion to his biographer Henri Hell that "I think in the future I will be played more often than Barraqué or Pousseur. After all, my music is not all that bad."

He will be, and it isn't. In Poulenc's music, *la figure humaine* speaks through *la voix humaine*, at once suffering love and inspiring it. So love and friendship deserve the last words. Here is Charles Koechlin, the great contrapuntist and apostle of French civilization, and the instructor of Poulenc's youth, in 1945:

> There is a Poulenc style, and you know how to be, sincerely and simply, *yourself*. If I do not like everything in that last collection of songs, I conclude with pleasure that I always know they are by Poulenc, and that they are above all *music*. The intense and noble emotion of *Cé* breathes the very soul of our wounded fatherland.

And here, in 1950, is Landowska, writing to "*Mon Francis que j'aime*: I think of our last lunch together.... Your radiant goodness, *the way you listen*, are a source of happiness." And here, finally, is Eluard in the same year: "I want to thank you for the evening spent with you and Pierre Bernac. Thank you for your clear, intelligent, intelligible music, thank Pierre Bernac for the infinite purity of his singing."

And, in this spirit of well-earned gratitude, let us spare a bit for the compilers of this book, in which the translations of Sidney Buckland sound like Poulenc *à l'anglaise*, and the notes and the biographical material are unfailingly pertinent. It is, like the products of Poulenc's own hand, handsomely but unfussily produced.

WILFRID MELLERS, professor emeritus of music at the University of York, is the author most recently of *Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion* (Pimlico).

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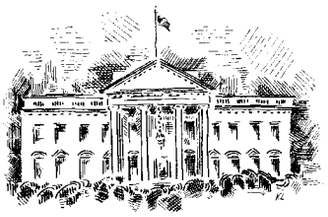
Ids 'R' us

HAVE YOU NOTICED HOW THOROUGHLY Lee Iacocca embodies the part of the public psyche he appeals to? Close your eyes and try to visualize the great American id, the wellspring of protectionism and racism. What do you see? That's right: it's him! My point isn't that Iacocca and virulent nationalism are both ugly. True, Lee won't be appearing in any Calvin Klein ads this spring. But the resemblance I'm talking about is more precise. The striking thing about Iacocca's face is that it is bloated yet gnarled. And that's Iacocca's America: self-indulgent and nasty. Japan is lean and mean. We're fat and mean. We spent the 1980s stuffing our face, and now we've decided we're fed up with everyone who didn't stop us. But at least Iacocca gets credit for truth in advertising. The same cannot be said for his partner in crime, the innocent-looking Dick Gephardt. In addition to resembling a ceramic choir-boy Christmas ornament, Gephardt does his Japan-bashing in relatively genteel terms. Whereas Iacocca talks about the Japanese "beating our brains in" and makes crude jokes about Japanese automakers wearing "Teflon kimonos," Gephardt merely accuses Japan of practicing "adversarial capitalism" and suggests that we forge a trade alliance with Europe, not Japan, because European nations are more "like us culturally, socially, and economically." Translation: the Japanese are beating our brains in, and they wear kimonos. Both men say they're not racists, and maybe they're right. But who cares? They're both fanning the flames of racism, and they're smart enough to know it. They've helped create an atmosphere in which many Asian Americans feel self-conscious and defensive when the subject of Japan, or trade, or even the recession, comes up; and that's the first step toward feeling generally defensive and genuinely threatened. Gephardtism is racist, whether or not Gephardt is, just as Buchananism is racist even if Pat Buchanan isn't, just as Willie Hortonism is racist even if George Bush isn't. The tricky business of peering into people's souls and trying to spot evil is largely superfluous when their actions and words are so palpably harmful.

BUT I DO HAVE ONE QUESTION about what goes on in Dick Gephardt's mind: Is he stupid or dishonest? On the "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour," defending his claim that the preference of Japanese buyers for Japanese cars reflects more on the Japanese than on the cars, Gephardt pursued this line of analysis: If American goods are so much shoddier than Japanese goods, how come we have a trade surplus with Europe? Um, excuse me, Dick, but the trade balance with Europe reflects the quality of our goods compared with *European* goods. Hence the term "trade balance with Europe." Now, it's true that Europe offers a good test of your thesis; but the way to test it is to see whether Europeans prefer American or Japanese cars. And they seem to prefer Japanese cars. Only they have trouble getting them, thanks to the prevalence in Europe of your economic philosophy.



WHY HAS THE BILL CLINTON S&L scandal been so widely ignored? True, the story is in some places sketchy; some years ago the Clintons asked that all relevant records be delivered to the governor's mansion, and key documents have now disappeared. (You know how drafty mansions are.) Still, the plot, as discerned by Jeff Gerth of *The New York Times*, is fairly simple. The Clintons joined in a real estate venture with a man who later acquired an S&L and, it appears, used the S&L to subsidize them; losses on the land deal that would normally have been borne by the Clintons, since they were given a 50 percent stake in the venture, and thus in any profits, seem to have been partly absorbed by the S&L. (Also, the S&L hired Hillary as its lawyer, thus sending cash directly to the Clintons as well.) After federal regulators deemed the S&L insolvent, a status that required Arkansas's securities commissioner to close it, Clinton appointed a *new* securities commissioner—a personal friend, and a lawyer in a firm that had represented the S&L. The S&L asked this new commissioner (or, actually, had Hillary ask) for a reprieve: approval of a novel fund-raising scheme. Approval was—surprise!—granted. And—surprise!—the scheme failed and the feds finally had to intervene. In sum: there is good reason to believe that Clinton, like many politicians, helped forestall the day of S&L reckoning; only he seems to have been particularly venal, selling out for personal gain, not campaign contributions. Now, don't get the idea that Clinton wants to cover this mess up. He turned over all unshredded records to a lawyer who conducted a *full* investigation—and who, it happens, is a friend of Clinton's. (Presumably Clinton's mother wasn't available.) Then again, who *isn't* a friend of Clinton's? He's got scores of journalists convinced that he considers them the best journalist around. Hence, perhaps, the failure of every known columnist to look into this juicy affair.

THE WHOLE CLINTON PHENOMEnon continues to puzzle and dishearten me. The man is legendarily unfaithful to his wife, he dishonestly avoided the draft (and then patronized his dupes with finely crafted, pseudo-anguished, soul-searching blather), and he's neck-deep in the above-outlined shenanigans. Yet almost no one has said: Hey, maybe being the nation's No. 1 role model just isn't the ideal job for this guy. Sure, Republicans are saying it. But where were all the Democratic pundits, consultants, and other talking heads back when an acceptable alternative to Clinton existed? (I didn't say an inspiring alternative.) They speculated that Clinton's checkered past might hurt his "electability," but none of them said it *should.* FDR called the presidency preeminently a place of moral leadership, and that's truer now than ever. For one thing, now that the average president is essentially a channeler for pollsters (Bush is the best example, but Clinton shows strong channeling potential), setting the nation's moral tone is about the only way to have a distinctive impact. For another thing, many current problems are basically moral. Picture a man with Clinton's credentials talking about restoring coherence to the black inner-city family, or the perils of unwed teenage motherhood, or the dangers of unsafe sex. Surely the irony will not go undetected. And, a bit more abstractly: Can you think of anyone less qualified than Clinton to preach, as he does, about "personal responsibility," or about the pressing economic need for Americans to postpone gratification? (Well, OK: Jim Morrison, but he's dead.) Apparently when he's on the campaign trail, where his libido can't be incontinuously sated, Clinton's id downshifts into chowhound mode; he has gained many pounds lately. In his general piggishness, Clinton is what he accused Paul Tsongas of being: a man for the 1980s. Granted, bloated is better than bloated and gnarled. And, more to the point, it's better, in this case, than weightless (i.e., Bush). But how depressing that I have to pause and reflect before saying that.

ROBERT WRIGHT

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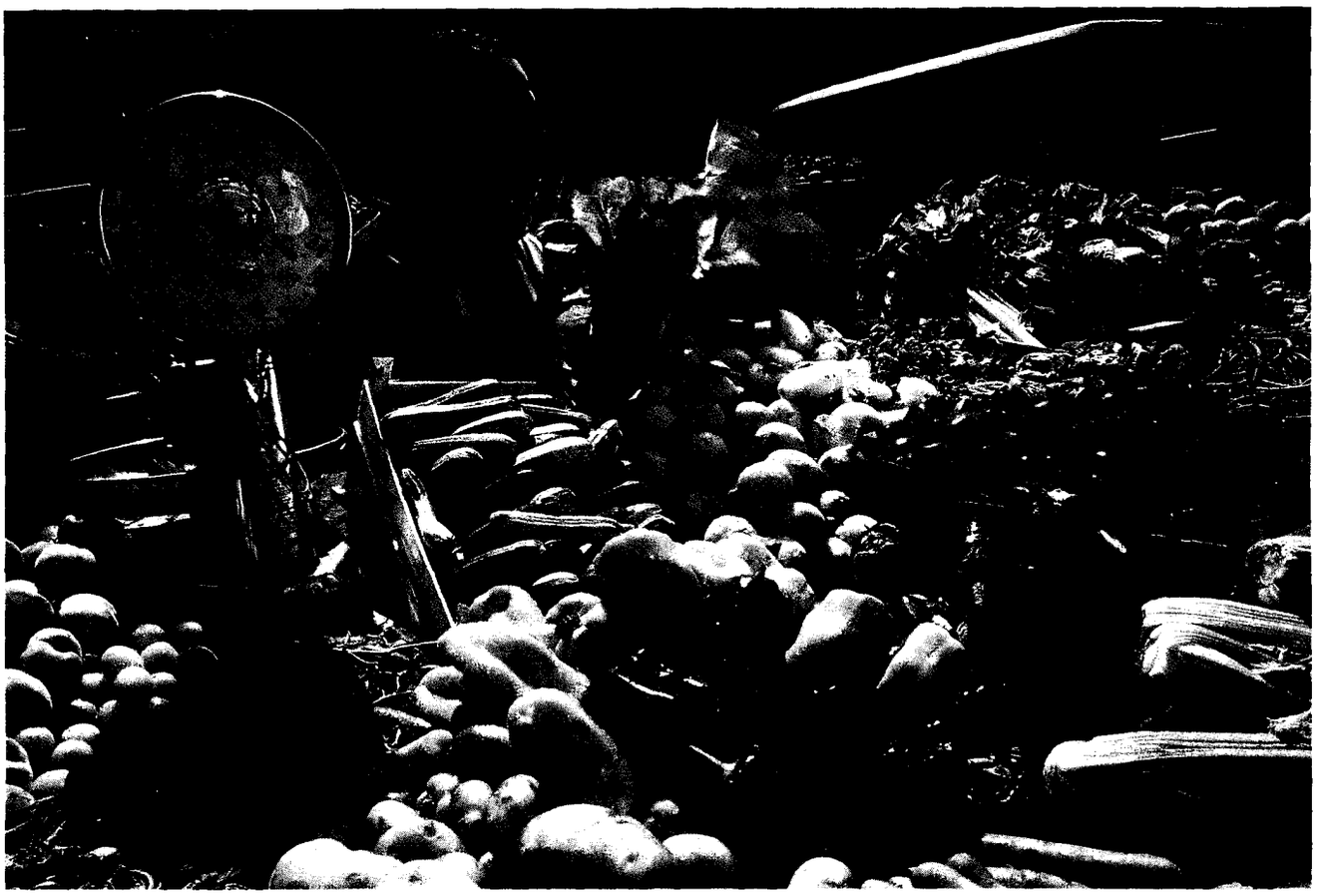

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